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CHARLES DICKENS

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

I

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CHARLES DICKENS

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

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CHARLES DICKENS

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

GADSHILL: FRONT

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CHARLES DICKENS

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

BY

EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY ARLO BATES

IN TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME I

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The frontispiece to the first volume is from a drawing made in 1838 by Samuel Lawrence. The vignette on the engraved title, Gadshill Place from the front, is from a photograph in the collection of Edwin Fay Rice, and is reproduced by his permission. The frontispiece to the second volume is after a photograph made in 1868, during Dickens's last visit to America. The vignette on the engraved title, Gadshill Place from the rear, is after a drawing by F. G. Kitton.

EDWIN PERCY WHIPPLE

THE critic is, of all the faithful servants of literature, least likely to be either adequately appreciated or rewarded; and the higher the grade of his work the greater is the likelihood that he will fail to win general recognition. The creator of art, if he be of real merit, may be late in coming to his own, but he can rest in the faith that time will do him justice; the critic who applies the principles which determine the ultimate value of that art is seldom greatly regarded while alive, and knows that his chance is small of being kept in memory after death. His work vanishes with the occasion, and the very knowledge which he establishes insures that in a brief time his judgments will appear too obvious to be of interest. Sainte-Beuve may seem an exception, but criticism has held in France a place which in modern times it has hardly attained elsewhere. Sainte-Beuve possessed a power of analyzing

character which was in reality essentially creative, and after all one has but to compare the vigor of his reputation to-day with that of any one of the writers he did so much to make famous, to realize that even he hardly escapes the general rule. The critic is not unlike the lexicographer, who, according to Dr. Johnson, is regarded by mankind as "doomed only to remove rubbish and clear obstructions from the paths of Learning and Genius."

When for any reason the criticisms of a score or more of years ago are read, one cause of their lack of permanence becomes painfully apparent: a critic must deal with the bad as well as the good, and his judgments upon the crowd of inferior authors whose works do not survive the flare of a temporary vogue, authors whom the critic himself has assisted to displace, are of no interest. The reasons why Tupper and Montgomery, despite their popularity, are of no permanent merit, are not likely to attract attention now that those laborious elaborators of rhyming dullness are no longer

read. The simple fact that a critic fulfills his duty to his own time insures the melancholy consequence that a considerable portion of his work will become obsolete with disconcerting rapidity.

It is therefore a matter of no surprise that the critical writings of the late E. P. Whipple should have come to be largely left unread by the present generation; but the same principle does not excuse the neglect which has been extended too generally to his excellent essays also. His reputation as a critic no doubt overshadowed his other work, but probably a more effective cause is the modern habit of neglecting all other forms of literature in favor of fiction. Dr. Bartol, in his funeral discourse, said justly that Mr. Whipple was "a man than whom none speaking and writing the English tongue has done more in our generation to keep the genius and virtue of others fresh in our recollection and bright before our eyes"; but the present generation does not respond readily to the claims

of writers of a time too far away to be novel and too near to have become idealized. The real value of Mr. Whipple's writings, however, is a claim which it cannot afford to ignore, and which it neglects only to its own loss.

Edwin Percy Whipple was born at Gloucester, Massachusetts, March 8, 1819. He came of old New England stock, and could boast among his ancestors a signer of the Declaration of Independence. His father, who died in the boy's infancy, was a man of unusual social gifts, and bequeathed to the son a marked charm of manner and address. The mother, a woman of much mental force, removed early in her widowhood to Salem, and her influence was probably the most powerful agent in the development of the lad. He attended the Salem public schools, its high school being his most advanced step in formal education. The quietly but intensely intellectual ideals of the old town could not fail to affect deeply a nature so sensitive and re-

sponsive; and in any case a temperament such as his is to its possessor more than the equivalent of a university course to the ordinary man. He read voraciously, and by the time he was fourteen he had already begun to contribute to the newspapers.

Business life began for the youth when at fifteen he became clerk in a bank. Three years later, in 1837, he exchanged his clerkship in Salem for one in a Boston office; and here he made friends rapidly. Before the year was out he had been appointed superintendent of the news-room of the Merchants' Exchange, an office which he held until 1860. The Mercantile Library, founded in 1820, was in those days an important centre of intellectual life, and in connection with it lectures were given by the most approved performers of a time when such addresses were the appointed means of cultural salvation throughout New England. Webster, Everett, Choate, Sumner, Channing, Emerson, and Holmes were among the speakers; and with this distinguished company was

in due time included Whipple himself. At a literary meeting of the Library Association in 1840 he delivered a satirical poem dealing with what Ben Jonson would have called the "humours" of the day, and it won general approbation. With James T. Fields and Daniel N. Haskell he was for many years prominent in the doings of the Association; and was one of half a dozen choice spirits who banded themselves together in an inner circle for the holding of gatherings, which, with a remnant of eighteenth-century fashions, they termed "Attic Nights." During all this time he was continuing his extensive reading, and making his name known at least locally by his contributions to the journals.

Wider appreciation of Mr. Whipple's powers may be said to have begun with the publication in the *Boston Miscellany* in 1843 of his essay on Macaulay. It was at once evident that a fresh force had come into American criticism, and the paper was hailed with enthusiasm. From this time on he published in

the *North American Review*, *Graham's Magazine*, the *Christian Examiner*, and other magazines, a series of admirable articles, and these were gathered into two volumes in 1848 and in 1851. In connection with the first-named of these, it may be remembered that Whittier said: "Whipple was one of the first to speak a good word for me in the *North American Review*." The time was propitious. New England was then in that process of intellectual development, so much in advance of the rest of the country, which went on continuously until it was disastrously checked by the Civil War and by the practical sweeping away or diverting into other interests of the generation which should have carried on its traditions. Criticism was eagerly sought and soundly appreciated, and if standards were provincial in the sense that they were hampered by conditions which had not entirely outgrown the colonial, they were not in the least provincial in any narrow acceptance of ideals below the highest.

succession from his industrious pen. He was one of the well-recognized figures in literary Boston, then more tangible and homogeneous than now, and a member of those two bodies which represented the quintessence of the intellectual life of the town, the Thursday Evening Club, and the more famous although less permanently influential Saturday Club with its honor roll of distinguished names. At the Saturday Club, where his associates included Emerson, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Lowell, Motley, Holmes, Whittier, Agassiz, Dwight, Governor Andrew, "Tom" Appleton, Sumner, Prescott, Parkman, and Henry James the elder, he seems to have held his own in the brilliant company by his sound common sense, his wit, and his genial temper. Thomas Wentworth Higginson said justly: "He was an essential part of the literary life of Boston at a time when that city probably furnished a larger proportion of the literary life of the nation than it will ever supply again." And in that life he bore a part by no means ade-

quately represented by the work which he left on paper. His sympathy, his suggestiveness, his wit, his power of stimulating others, all counted, and all made part of the total effect of his life and personality.

Many still living recall with pleasurable regret the social life of which Mr. Whipple and his wife (formerly Miss Charlotte Hastings) were for years the centre, and especially the Sunday evening gatherings where thoughtful and cultivated people came together informally to enjoy real conversation and the stimulation of an atmosphere of ideas. The old-fashioned "conversazione" has disappeared, more's the pity, and those Sunday evenings were among the latest survivals of a form of social intercourse perhaps too intellectual for the sensation-exhausted folk of to-day. Nora Perry, herself too little remembered, a brilliant and individual woman with more of the singing quality of the ballad in her verse than has as yet been within the gift of any other American poet, has given a picture

Mr. Whipple's intellectual activity continued practically up to his death, June 16, 1886. The expression of appreciation and of loss in the public press at the time bore evidence to the esteem and respect in which he was held.

It is as a critic that Mr. Whipple was best known, a fact which was the natural result of his prominence in this department of letters and of the scarcity of possible rivals. His essays, which have the greater permanent value, — if it can be said that these are distinct, — were no less successful than his criticism; but the general reading public, which must have classification and which is less likely to appreciate a writer than it is to ticket him, found it easier to label Mr. Whipple a critic than it was to fix upon a term which should appropriately and comprehensively include his various writings. It is to be remembered that before his time criticism was so rare in American letters that it might almost be said not to exist in any serious sense. Per-

haps Poe and Lowell are the only names which to-day would be likely to come to mind among his contemporaries in this connection, with a possible thought of Griswold and Bayard Taylor.

From the first Whipple's criticism had the quality which is least likely to be found in early work of this class, — its opinions were original. J. H. Ward, in a notice written for the *New Princeton Review* at the time of the critic's death, says of the first collection of essays: "This youth of twenty-five years had passed in review, in the space of not more than three years, such writers as Macaulay, Talfourd, Webster, Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge, Dr. South, the old English drama, and his contemporary English critics, . . . his criticism was his own, and has not been reversed." A certain unconscious fearlessness distinguished his judgment, and it was with happy fitness that in its obituary notice the *Boston Transcript* applied to him his own comment upon Rufus Choate: "'Subtlety in

the perception of distinctions, subtility in the perception of resemblances, sympathy with the ideal, and sympathy with the familiar; these, both in their separate exercise and their subtle interpenetration, are resources' which he commanded and blended at will."

One of the qualities which made his critical work effective was the pithy fashion in which he condensed a character into an epigram, as when he said of Leigh Hunt: "Shakespeare, Spenser, Shelley, Coleridge, he dandles on his knee, as if they were babies, paws them, and would fill their dear little mouths with sugared epithets of eulogy."

Or these: —

"Simplicity was the result of the complexities which entered into his [Jonathan Edwards's] mind and character."

"The self-pleased chuckle of Montaigne."

"Hawthorne had spiritual insight, but did not penetrate to the sources of spiritual joy."

"Johnson was big, but Shakespeare was great."

"[John Adams's] moral impatience was such that he seems to fret as he thinks."

The same skill is shown in his characterization of a well-known variety of books when he says: "The most hopeless characteristic of this literature is its complacent exhibition of distressing excellencies, — its evident incapacity to rise into promising faults."

This mastery of pithy expression is marked throughout his writings. It is perhaps in part due to Mr. Whipple's mercantile training, since his business life was passed in circles where concise and terse speech is a necessity. Epigram has later been so often cultivated for its own sake as to be somewhat discredited; but it has still saving grace when it is properly made a means to an end, and threescore years ago it had in American literature more savor, both because it had more of the flavor of novelty and of that widely different quality — originality. Much sound sense and not a little wisdom are packed into sentences like the following: —

"The literature of America is but an insufficient measure of the realized capacities of the American mind. . . . By the necessities of our position, the aggregate mind of the country has been exercised in creating the nation."

"No person can be called educated until he has organized his knowledge into faculty."

"The peculiar combination of virtues which is called integrity is the source of the peculiar combination of faculties we call wisdom."

Trenchantly suggestive, too, is his remark on the alleged caricature of Dickens: "Such caricature as this is to character what epigram is to fact,—a mode of conveying truth more distinctly by suggesting it through a brilliant exaggeration." Or the well-known saying: "If Jonathan Edwards, turned romancer, had dramatized his sermon, 'Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God,' he could not have written a more terrific story of guilt and retribution than 'The Scarlet Letter.'"

No critic could have been more admirably

endowed with the prime quality of impartiality. He was tolerant by nature, and he possessed the breadth which comes from culture and contact with practical affairs. To the present day he remains the broadest and most reasonable of American critics, and is perhaps the most logical. He lacked the æsthetic sensitiveness of Lowell, but he was more catholic; and in the judicial temper Whipple far excelled. He had not the subtility of mind, the almost uncanny adroitness of perception, which distinguished Poe; but he was infinitely more sincere, and unlike Poe he was even and sane. Rather paradoxically he might be said to be at once more reverent of authority and less given to prejudice than either.

Whipple's criticism of poetry is sometimes limited by the tendency to consider the intellectual content rather than the æsthetic, or rather to fail to realize completely that the intellectual content is the accident and the æsthetic the essential. He sometimes, moreover, lacks warmth, and affects the reader too much

as a disembodied intelligence. In writing of Charles Dickens he is full of glow, but wise and appreciative as is his essay on Wordsworth, one feels throughout something too much of the student as opposed to the lover.

The limit of his power as a critic was in part due to his time and in part to his temperament. The necessity of estimating an author's work in relation to his age, its place in artistic and national development, its racial quality, was hardly likely to be vividly present in the mind of a critic of the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in America, and Mr. Whipple lacked a sense of relative values on a large scale. His temperament, moreover, lacked creative power. He was saved from extravagance, it is true, by being safe from the danger of being kindled by the suggestiveness of his author into imaginative production; but equally he was hampered in the endeavor to interpret to his audience the inner significance of a great imaginative work. Few men could better read or more clearly

interpret what was written, but he had less skill to read what might be surmised between the lines.

Probably both to the critical traditions of his age and to his nature was due his tendency to examine details more satisfactorily than to grasp a work as a whole. He shared the weakness with Lowell, and to some extent with Poe; but it was a fault which not only was little noticed fifty years ago, but which to-day would occur to a comparatively small number even of fairly careful readers. His comments were admirably explicit, and were marked throughout by a certain Yankee shrewdness; and to ask more than that would have been to demand that in his day and generation he should have been a prodigy. "The first thing to be settled in reviewing a composition," Mr. Whipple said, "is its vitality"; and in so far he did regard its effect as a whole.

One of the strong bonds between Mr. Whipple and the work of Dickens was undoubtedly the humor of the great novelist; and with that

blessed quality the critic was himself well endowed. The refinement of an individual or of a people is pretty accurately indicated by taste in pleasantries. Vulgarity which is successfully masked in seriousness shows its unmistakable peony-cheeked face when jesting begins. Each of the long line of avowed American humorists from "John Phœnix" to "Mark Twain" has had much the same rawness of flavor as is found in American wines with their too tangible smack of new soil, and each has shown some lack of subtle discrimination between what is amusing and what is coarse. In this particular the instinct of Mr. Whipple was unerring, and perhaps there is no more delicate and delicious piece of purely humorous writing in American literature than "Mr. Hardhack on the Derivation of Man from the Monkey." The subject is no longer fresh, but the flavor is delightful. "Mr. Hardhack on the Sensational in Literature and Life" is inferior only from the fact that the genuine indignation of the writer at the prostitution

of literary art to base uses gets the better of him. Throughout his work are scattered sparkles of his quaint and shrewd exposition of the absurd, as where he remarks of Jonathan Edwards's famous treatise on the Will that it "remains as a kind of practical argument for the everlasting damnation of those who question the infallibility of its logic"; or the quiet observation that "in New England they feared the Devil; in New York they dared the Devil." In "The Romance of Rascality" he remarks that "it is practically assumed that the final cause of human society is the provision of a brilliant theatre for the exploits of its outcasts"; and elsewhere he observes: "Public indignation is the cheapest article of domestic manufacture; there is no need of a tariff to protect that." In his talk he was full of quaint touches, as when he spoke of "the effete of society," or "the gentlemen of wealth and pleasure." He said to me once with his smile of inimitable drollery that it seemed to him a crying injustice that a man could not copy-

right his jokes. "If you have the luck to say a good thing," he complained, "the next day somebody repeats it to you as his own." While the wit of conversation is likely to be hardly less evanescent than the bubbles on wine, whoever remembers Mr. Whipple's talk must recall at least the persuasive flavor of fun which pervaded even his serious moods; and it is easy to see how this gave him an especially quick sympathy with the works of the great humorist.

His fondness for Dickens and his admiration of him were both great; and indeed nowhere else in all the wide range of his critical work is he so warm or so sympathetic as in dealing with his favorite novelist. He was too instinctively a critic and too thoroughly honest to be blind to the faults of the master; but he was perhaps more subtly in sympathy — strong as the praise may seem — with the genius of Dickens than was any other important critic who has written of him on either side of the water. Even with fresh information, newer light, and the advantage

of a further remove from the fascination of fresh work, later commentators have been unable to give appreciative interpretations of the work of Dickens with which the comments of Mr. Whipple may not well endure comparison.

The introductions which have been collected in the present volumes first show fully their real worth now that they may be read consecutively, and they make their appeal to the reader as a complete study of the work of Dickens, at once comprehensive and admirable. Mr. Whipple, with excellent judgment and taste, gives those facts of biography which were directly connected with Dickens's work or indirectly influenced it. The essays have fairness, insight, shrewdness, sympathy, and clarity; and they are throughout made consistent by the fact that the critic has well defined and permanent standards. Together they form a critical life of the novelist, not only of lively interest but of high and enduring value.

The shortcomings of his author Mr. Whipple noted with judicial impartiality. "There is no writer," he remarks, "more deficient in generalization."

In the same vein of frankness he writes:—

"Nature, in lavishing on him so many precious gifts, had seen fit to deny him either the philosophic spirit or the philosophic mind."

"Whatever Dickens understands he humorously represents; whatever he misunderstands he humorously misrepresents."

"His devil is ever the devil of the nursery; it is only an ugly, efficient, middle-class devil; a devil who disturbs good people in their eating, drinking, loving; but the Satan of Milton, who rebels against the Divine order of the Universe, the misanthropic Mephistopheles of Goethe, who sneers at it, were conceptions altogether beyond his ken. Hence the persistent superficiality of Dickens in the conception and representation of evil characters."

"It is necessary to discriminate between Dickens's solid characters, his characters which

are perceived as both inwardly and outwardly alive, and his hints of character, his sketches of character, and his satires on personified abuses and vices, all of which are endowed with proper names, and appear in his books as persons."

The last passage indicates the acuteness of the critic's perception, and is a quiet answer to the objection, which even now is sometimes heard, that Dickens personified traits but did not create persons. It is supplemented by the statement elsewhere: "The strength of Dickens in characterization is in seizing and setting forth the oddities, singularities, and eccentricities of character, without exactly individualizing any special trait."

Again he writes: "Dickens forced all classes into some sympathy, instinctive or reluctant, with his own creations, in spite of certain solid critical objections to his general method of representing character, and to the doubtful contrivances on which he sometimes relied to call forth laughter and tears."

A part of the secret of this power he indicates in passages such as this: "Both in describing scenery and in representing character, Dickens seems to forget everything but what is before his mental eye. The closeness of his realization is due to his complete imaginative and emotional absorption in the objects and persons he discerns and watches. . . . In 'Oliver Twist,' Oliver tells good Mrs. Bedwin that if his mother in heaven had seen him hurt it would have made her sorrowful. . . . The old lady makes no reply to this, but she wipes her eyes, and then taking up her spectacles, which lay on the counterpane of the bed, 'wipes them also, as if they were a part and parcel of her features.' We may say of this unconscious action that Charles Dickens saw her do it."

It is not necessary to go on with examples of the felicity and breadth of Mr. Whipple's criticism on Dickens, since they are contained in the following pages. Of his qualities as a critic the summing-up was thus given in an

editorial in the *Boston Advertiser* at the time of his death: —

"His acuteness, his sagacity, his sympathy, his judgment, his wit, were natural gifts, and he developed them by assiduous, faithful discipline which made him a master in his chosen department. We have no one who could more surely discriminate between the wheat and the chaff in letters and in character, and no one who could make the grounds of his discrimination more clearly understood by his readers."

If the critic is too soon forgotten, the results of good criticism are permanent, and American letters still owe to the admirable work of Edwin Percy Whipple a debt the magnitude of which the present volumes cannot but make evident to any thoughtful reader.

ARLO BATES

CHARLES DICKENS

THE MAN AND HIS WORK

I

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

Mr. Tony Weller, when Mr. Pickwick praised the intelligence of his son Samuel, expressed his pleasure at the compliment as something which reflected honor on himself. "I took," he said, "a great deal o' pains in his eddication, sir; let him run the streets when he was werry young, sir, and shift for hisself. It 's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir." When Mr. John Dickens was asked where his son Charles was educated, he exclaimed, "Why, indeed, sir, — ha! ha! — he may be said to have educated himself!"

The effect of this system of education by neglect, which produced such specimens of humanity as Samuel Weller and Charles Dickens, shows that the method, however ruinous in the majority of cases, is sometimes seemingly justified by the results. Still, the great humor-

ist of our time, the man who has domesticated himself as a genial companion at millions of firesides, the man who has provoked so many bursts of humane laughter and unsealed the springs of so many purifying tears, would have been a wiser guide, both in what he laughed at and in what he wept over, had his early culture been such as to furnish him, at the start, with demonstrated general principles in matters of history, government, political economy, and philosophy. Such knowledge would have checked and corrected the fallacies into which he was sometimes whirled by the intensity of his perception of unrelated facts, and the unwithholding warmth with which he threw himself into the delineation of exceptional individuals.

In comparing him with such a master workman as Fielding, in the representation of life, manners, and character, we are at once struck by the absence in Dickens of the power of generalization. Fielding generalizes as easily as he individualizes; his large reason is always

abreast of his cordial humor; and indeed his humor is enriched by his reason. The characters he draws most vividly, and in whom he takes most delight, never possess his sympathies so exclusively as to prevent his sly, subtle criticism of the motives of their acts and of the consequences of their acts. He always conveys the impression of knowing more about them than their self-knowledge reveals; and the culminating charm of his exquisite pleasantry comes from the broad and solid good sense he applies to the illusions, amiable or criminal, of the individuals he creates or depicts. He ever has in view the inexorable external laws which his characters can violate only at the expense of being victimized; his disciplined understanding more than keeps pace with his humorous creative imagination; and great as he unquestionably is in characterization, he is never imprisoned in any of his imagined forms of individual excellence, frailty, or depravity, but stands apart from his creations, —a philosopher, well grounded in scholar-

ship, in experience, in practical philosophy, and specially judging individuals from his generalized knowledge of human life.

Dickens never attained, owing to the defects of his early education, this power of generalization, and consequently he rarely exhibited those final touches of humorous perception which the possession of it gives. He loses himself in the throng of the individuals he represents; but Fielding impresses the reader with the fact that he is never himself fooled by the plausible fallacies which are uttered, in certain circumstances of their career, by the characters he so vividly represents.

Charles Dickens was the son of Wilkins Micawber, Esquire, — I beg pardon, — of John Dickens, a clerk in the navy-pay office. He was born on Friday, February 7, 1812. Friday is popularly supposed to be an unlucky day; but certainly, on the particular Friday which gave birth to Charles Dickens, humanity was "in luck." He was the second

of eight children, and was, in his childhood, a small, frail, queer, and sickly boy, — a sort of Paul Dombey before he had developed into a David Copperfield. As a boy he was too feeble to find pleasure in the ordinary athletic amusements of his companions; but in his father's limited collection of books were the "Arabian Nights," the "Tales of the Genii," some fairy tales, and the romances of De Foe, Fielding, Smollett, and Le Sage. The various schools in which he obtained the rudiments of his education afforded him little mental nutriment; and he had mastered and, in imagination, realized the lives and adventures of Tom Jones, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, and Humphry Clinker, before such books could appeal injuriously to his senses and appetites. At the period he was devouring such novels as these, Scott was at the height of his popularity; yet there are no evidences that Dickens, at the age of ten, had caught sight of a volume of "Waverley," "Guy Mannering," "The Antiquary," "Rob Roy,"

or "The Heart of Midlothian." His father's small library was confined to romances of an older date and a coarser texture. Still, books which might have corrupted a youth of thirteen were comparatively harmless to a boy of eight or ten; especially as this boy was a genius in embryo, with something of the chivalrous delicacy of feeling towards children and women which was afterwards indicated in the character of young Walter Gay. In connection with this love of whatever was innocent and pure, he early developed a closeness, certainty, and penetration of observation, a sureness of memory of what he had observed, a power of connecting his observations with the instinctive play of his latent qualities of sympathy and humor, and a force of will in the assertion of Charles Dickens as a personage not to be confounded with other boys of his age, which show that the child was, in his case, literally the father of the man. He observed everything and forgot nothing. As a boy, his realizing imagination identified him-

self with the hero of every romance he read, and reproduced in memory every scene he had witnessed. With the acutest observation of the actual world around him, in his limited experience, he still early lived in an ideal world of his own.

When he was about ten years old, his father, as was natural, was arrested for debt, and lodged in the Marshalsea prison for debtors. Charles, on a salary of six shillings a week, was sent, to do what he could to support himself and to aid the family, to an establishment for the manufacture of blacking, which was set up by a relative of Dickens, in rivalry of the world-renowned "Warren," whose name still survives in both hemispheres as the man who has been instrumental in giving the last and finest polish and shine to shoes and boots. Charles's work was, in his own words, "to cover the pots of paste-blacking, first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat, all

was again sent to school, was educated to a limited extent, and at the age of fifteen was placed in an attorney's office as a clerk, or, rather, office lad. But by this time he had developed the strong point in his character, self-asserting will joined to untiring industry. He mastered the mystery of short-hand; became a reporter of proceedings in Parliament, and a wonderfully alert special reporter of speeches made by leading statesmen in the provinces. He could write out a clear report of a speech, in a post-chaise, furiously driven through a storm of rain and sleet towards London, with only a lantern to guide the swift motions of his pencil, and supply the "London Morning Chronicle," the newspaper to which he was attached, with the result of his night's journey, in written words which gave the printers but little trouble to decipher. Indeed, his early successes as a reporter were marked by the same energy which characterized his after triumphs as a creator. Whatever he undertook to do he did resolutely and did

well. The sickly boy grew rapidly up into a strong man, — physically and intellectually strong. His rough experiences made him take discomfort and hardship not only bravely, but even laughingly. He converted, indeed, his experiences into commodities; and the "Pickwick Papers" are to a great extent the record of his humorously idealized perception of the various kinds of life he met in city and country while engaged in his duties as a reporter.

As an author, his first appearance in public was signalized by a slight sketch, published in the "Monthly Magazine" for January, 1834, entitled "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," or, as he afterward called it, "Mr. Minns and his Cousin." For two years after this he stole sufficient time from his labors as a reporter to write for the same magazine, and for the "Evening Chronicle," the series of papers which he afterward published under the title of "Sketches by Boz." These show considerable powers of observation, wit, and

satire; there are gleams, here and there, of his peculiar sentiment and fancy; and the manner and style of representation are bright, brisk, and "clever"; but they are still comparatively flashy and superficial, and are specially shallow in characterization. The "Sketches," however, gave him sufficient notoriety to induce a shrewd publishing firm to propose to him a scheme which was rapidly to raise notoriety into reputation and reputation into fame. Mr. Hall, of the firm of Chapman and Hall, waited upon him at his chambers in Furnival's Inn, and proposed the publication of "a monthly something," of which Seymour was to furnish the illustrations and Dickens the text. The result of this conference was the publication, on March 31, 1836, of the first number of "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club," edited by "Boz." Mr. Seymour, the artist, had at first sketched Mr. Pickwick as a long, thin man. Mr. Chapman, one of the publishers, suggested instead the figure of a friend of his by the name of John Foster, "a fat old

beau who would wear, in spite of the ladies' protests, drab tights and black gaiters"; [1] and

[1] A detailed account of the origin of the work by Dickens himself will be found in his Preface to the Library Edition. In this account the author was mainly concerned with certain misstatements regarding the part which Mr. Seymour had in the plan of the publication. He does not pursue the subject of the illustrations, and the reader may wish to know the subsequent history. Seymour had already designed the decoration of the green paper cover to the serial. The name of Mr. R. W. Buss was suggested to the publishers by the wood-engraver, Mr. John Jackson, who was the author of an important *History of Wood Engraving*. Mr. Buss was a painter who had made some interesting and humorous designs, but was unfamiliar with the art of etching, which had been made use of thus far by Seymour, and at the last moment, after unsuccessful trials, was compelled to put his designs into the hands of a workman, who, he complained, spoiled the effect. Two only were used, and these were shortly after displaced by designs supplied by the artist who now took up the work. Meanwhile Seymour's death had caused a good many draughtsmen to apply for the work. "I can remember," Thackeray said in one of his after-dinner speeches, "when Mr. Dickens was a very young man, and had commenced delighting the world with some charming humorous works, in covers which were light green, and came out once a month; that this young man wanted an artist to illustrate his writ-

Dickens took the name from that of a celebrated coach-proprietor of Bath. Samuel Weller notices this coincidence in the thirty-fifth chapter of the work, when his master leaves London in the Bath stage. He sees the name on the coach-door, and thinks it a premedi-

ings. I recollect walking up to his chambers in Furnival's Inn, with two or three drawings in my hand, which strange to say he did not find suitable." Thackeray was afterward to use his pencil to better effect in accompanying his own pen. Another candidate was John Leech. The successful applicant was Hablot Knight Browne, a young fellow just one and twenty, who had lately etched a large plate illustrative of John Gilpin's Ride, and it was in Mr. Jackson's chambers that Mr. Chapman saw the picture, and was at once attracted by the artist's work. At first Browne used the signature "Nemo," but after two plates had been done he adopted "Phiz" for his sobriquet, the better, he says, to harmonize with Dickens's "Boz." He was long to be associated with the author, and his designs, especially for *Pickwick*, may be said to be identified with the characters. Many other artists, among whom may be named Sir John Gilbert, Alfred Crowquill, and Frederic Barnard, have furnished designs illustrative of *Pickwick*, but the only one besides Seymour, Buss, and Browne, employed by Dickens himself, was C. R. Leslie, who designed a frontispiece for the cheap edition published in 1847.

tated assault on the dignity of the club; for, he says, "not content vith writin' up Pickwick, they puts 'Moses' afore it, vich I call addin' insult to injury, as the parrot said ven they not only took him from his native land, but made him talk the English langwidge arterwards"; and Sam is much surprised when, in answer to his question, 'Ain't nobody to be whopped for takin' this here liberty, sir?" he is told that the occasion furnishes no appropriate outlet for his propensities to pugilism. "I hope," says Sam, as he reluctantly obeys, "that 'ere trial has n't broke his spirit, but it looks bad, werry bad."

The success of the "Pickwick Papers" was almost unprecedented in literary history. For the first number the binder was directed to prepare for only four hundred copies; for the fifteenth, the order was for forty thousand. The work literally took the town by storm.[1]

[1] Mr. Crocker remarks on the independent success of *Pickwick*: "With the exception of occasional extracts in the newpapers, he received little or no assistance from the Press. Yet, in less than six months from

It quickly established itself as a favorite with high and low, wherever the English language was known. Macaulay received the earlier numbers when he was in India, and resisted the novelty of the style and characters with all the force of his critical conservatism, but began to appreciate the riotous humor of the work as early as in the second chapter, — where Alfred Jingle describes, in brief, broken-backed, inconsecutive statements, his conquest of Don Bolaro's daughter, as the certain result of being himself a "handsome Englishman," — and ended in being as fond of *Pickwick* as of *Sir Charles Grandison*. Sydney Smith and Jeffrey resisted a little longer; but

the appearance of the first number of the *Pickwick Papers*, the whole reading world was talking about them; the names of Winkle, Wardle, Weller, Snodgrass, Dodson and Fogg, had become familiar in our mouths as household words. Nay, Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-drapers' windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers' advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the streets, and the portrait of the author of *Pelham* or *Crichton* was scraped down or pasted over to make room for that of the new popular favorite in the omnibuses."

when their objection gave way, they almost made an idol of the author they had at first tried to represent as a mere caricaturist. The marked distinction of the popularity of Dickens, as compared with that of all other novelists of the century except Scott, was due to the fact that it overleaped the barriers which separate the classes into which English people are divided, and extended all the way down from the throne to the cottage. Dukes and dandies, lords and ladies of all descriptions, wits, humorists, critics, cynics, diners-out, — indeed, the whole army of the conventional aristocracy of birth, manners, and literature,[1] — were

[1] A capital illustration of the hold which *Pickwick* has on the lettered class is to be found in the amusing mock-examination paper set by C. S. Calverley, the witty Cambridge University scholar. Mr. Walter Besant took the highest honors in the examination!

AN EXAMINATION PAPER.

"THE POSTHUMOUS PAPERS OF THE PICKWICK CLUB."

Cambridge, 1857.

1. Mention any occasions on which it is specified that the Fat Boy was *not* asleep; and that (1) Mr.

more or less carried away by this genial humorist, who gave them the electric shock of a brisk and new surprise. Sam Weller elbowed

Pickwick and (2) Mr. Weller, senr., ran. Deduce from expressions used on one occasion Mr. Pickwick's maximum of speed.

2. Translate into coherent English, adding a note wherever a word, a construction, or an illusion requires it: —

"Go on, Jemmy — like black-eyed Susan — all in the Downs" — "Smart chap that cabman — handled his fives well — but if I 'd been your friend in the green Jemmy — punch his head — pig's whisper — pieman, too."

Elucidate the expression, "the Spanish Traveller," and the "narcotic bedstead."

3. Who were Mr. Staple, Goodwin, Mr. Brooks, Villam, Mrs. Bunkin, "old Nobs," "cast-iron head," "young Bantam"?

4. What operation was performed on Tom Smart's chair? Who little thinks that in which pocket, of what garment, in where, he has left what, entreating him to return to whom, with how many what and all how big?

5. Give, approximately, the height of Mr. Dubbley; and, accurately, the Christian names of Mr. Grummer, Mrs. Raddle, and the Fat Boy; also the surname of the Zephyr.

6. "Mr. Weller's knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar." Illustrate this by reference to the facts.

his way into fashionable drawing-rooms from which even Pelham would have been excluded; and his estimable father, Tony of the same

7. Describe the Rebellion which had irritated Mr. Nupkins on the day of Mr. Pickwick's arrest.

8. Give in full Samuel Weller's first compliment to Mary, and his father's critique upon the same young lady. What church was on the valentine that first attracted Mr. Samuel's eye in the shop?

9. Describe the common Profeel-machine.

10. State the component parts of a dog's nose; and simplify the expression "taking a grinder."

11. On finding his principal in the pound, Mr. Weller and the town-beadle varied directly. Show that the latter was ultimately eliminated, and state the number of rounds in the square which is not described.

12. "Any think for air and enterprise; as the wery old donkey observed ven they voke him up from his deathbed to carry ten gen'lm'n to Greenwich in a tax-cart." Illustrate this by stating any remark recorded in the Pickwick Papers to have been made by a (previously) dumb animal, with the circumstances under which he made it.

13. What kind of cigars did Mr. Ben Allen chiefly smoke, and where did he knock and take naps alternately, under the impression that it was his home?

14. What was the ordinary occupation of Mr. Sawyer's boy? whence did Mr. Allen derive the idea that there was a special destiny between Mr. S. and Arabella?

name, winked, lifted his pewter mug of beer to his lips, and, in the intervals of slowly imbibing the liquid, discoursed wisely on the terrors

15. Describe Weller's Method of "gently indicating his presence" to the young lady in the garden; and the Form of Salutation usual among the coachmen of the period.

16. State any incidents you know in the career of Tom Martin, butcher, previous to his incarceration.

17. Give Weller's Theories for the extraction of Pickwick from the Fleet. Where was his wife's will found?

18. How did the old lady make a memorandum, and of what, at whist? Show that there were at least three times as many fiddles as harps in Muggleton at the time of the ball at Manor Farm.

19. What is a red-faced Nixon?

20. Write down the chorus to each verse of Mr. S. Weller's song, and a sketch of the mottle-faced man's excursus on it. Is there any ground for conjecturing that he (Sam) had more brothers than one?

21. How many lumps of sugar went into the Shepherd's liquor as a rule? and is any exception recorded?

22. What seal was on Mr. Winkle's letter to his father? What penitential attitude did he assume before Mr. Pickwick?

23. "She's a swelling visibly." When did the same phenomenon occur again, and what fluid caused the pressure on the body in the latter case?

of second marriages, while lolling on damask cushions in the boudoirs of countesses. This welcomed intrusion of the vulgar, of what is called "the common herd," into the selectest of select circles, was doubtless to be referred, in some degree, to the disgust which intelligent people of fashion had begun to feel for

24. How did Mr. Weller, senior, define the Funds, and what view did he take of reduced Consols? In what terms is his elastic force described, when he assaulted Mr. Stiggins at the meeting? Write down the name of the meeting.

25. "Προβατογνώμων: a good judge of cattle; hence, a good judge of character." Note on Æsch. Ag. — Illustrate the theory involved by a remark of the parent Weller.

26. Give some account of the word "fanteeg," and hazard any conjecture explanatory of the expression, "My Prooshan Blue," applied by Mr. Samuel to Mr. Tony Weller.

27. In developing to P. M. his views of a proposition, what assumption did Mr. Pickwick feel justified in making?

28. Deduce from a remark of Mr. Weller, junior, the price per mile of cabs at the period.

29. What do you know of the hotel next the Bull at Rochester?

30. Who, besides Mr. Pickwick, is recorded to have worn gaiters?

"fashionable novels," then in the last stage of intellectual inanition; but the fact of their exceptional admission into exclusive circles is due to the exceptional genius of the man by whom they were introduced. The middle and the "lower" classes were more easily managed by this magician, for in these was the "main haunt and region" of his romance; and they clung to him from the first with a grip that has never been relaxed. They felt that he had idealized their somewhat commonplace existence; that he had domesticated in the imagination of the English people a series of racy characters which were universally felt to belong to "the good society" of human nature, however distant they might be from the society of tedious lords and ladies; that until some genius should spring up, capable of idealizing aristocratic life in similar vivid and poetically humorous pictures of life and character, they would be dominant in the imaginations of men and women; and that, as the poet of the *bourgeois* and the proletariat,

Dickens would give the law of essential humanity and politeness to the supercilious upper classes of gentry and nobility whom he and they equally disliked.

Dickens tells us that his friends dissuaded him from undertaking a work to be issued in monthly parts, price one shilling, because it was "a low, cheap form of publication," by which he would ruin all his "rising hopes." Macaulay, in his essay on Addison, has recorded a few of the instances in which the friends of an author have adjured him not to undertake the particular work by which he raised himself to that eminence which now makes him widely known. Herder entreated Goethe not "to take up so unpromising a subject as 'Faust.'" The "History of Charles the Fifth" gave Robertson immense reputation, and put forty-five hundred pounds in his pocket, but Hume tried to persuade him not to choose such a period for the exercise of his historical talent. Pope advised Addison to print the tragedy of "Cato," but not to run

the risk of its being hissed from the stage. One of Scott's best friends predicted the failure of "Waverley," and urged him not to peril his reputation by publishing it. The list might be indefinitely extended of intelligent persons who, with the most cordial good-will to an author, have advised him not to think of doing the special thing which his taste or his genius prompted him to do. In few cases has the wise neglect, by a man of genius, of the advice of friends been more triumphantly vindicated than by Charles Dickens in the matter of the "Pickwick Papers."

The "Pickwick Papers" is especially interesting to the critic as exhibiting the genius of the author in its processes and growth. It requires two or three perusals before the direct assault on the risibility of the reader has sufficiently subsided to allow any opportunity for the exercise of analysis and judgment;[1]

[1] Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, in his very entertaining *The History of Pickwick: An Account of its Characters, Localities, Allusions and Illustrations*, has amused himself by attempting a chronological conspectus of

even then the critic titters and chuckles as he dissects, and is reluctantly compelled to admit that humor, as well as beauty, "is its

the story, which is here given, though without the frequent notes in which Mr. Fitzgerald discusses the several problems presented.

1827.

May 12. Meeting of the Club.
" 13. The Start — Arrival at Rochester — The Ball.
" 14. Winkle's Duel.
" 15. The Review.
" 16. The Drive to Manor Farm.
" 17. The Rook Shooting, and Cricket Match.
" 18. Jingle's Disclosure to the Spinster Aunt.
" 19. } The Plot.
" 20. }
" 21. }
" 22. The Elopement.
" 23. Arrival of Wardle and Mr. Pickwick at the "White Hart."
" 24. Return to Manor Farm.
" 25. The "Leather Bottle."
" 26. Return to Town.
" 28. Scene with Mrs. Bardell.
" 29. Departure for Eatanswill.
" 30. The Nomination.
June 2. The Election.
" 5. "Third Morning after the Election" — Visit from Mr. Leo Hunter.
" 6. Mrs. Leo Hunter's Party.

own excuse for being." Carlyle gives a singular illustration of the fascination that the work exercised on the public mind while it

June 8. Bury St. Edmunds.
" 9. Adventure at the Boarding School.
" 10. } Mr. Pickwick confined to his bed.
" 11. }
" 12. Reads aloud the Story of the Parish Clerk.
" 13. Arrival of Winkle and Tupman.
Sept. 1. The Shooting Party.
" 2. "Thursday" — Mr. Pickwick goes to London.
" 3. "Friday" — Interview with Dodson and Fogg.
" 5. Ipswich — Adventure in the Double-Bedded Room.
" 6. Scene with Nupkins.
" 7. Return to Town.
" 8. } Sam's Visit to Dorking.
" 9. }
Dec. 23. Trundle's Wedding.
" 24. The Gabriel Grub Story.
" 25. Christmas Day — Introduction of Bob Sawyer.
" 26. Return to London.

1828.

Jan. 8. "Ten days or a fortnight after his return," service of subpœna by Jackson.
" 9. Visit to Perker.
" 10. Bob Sawyer's Party ("the Invitation was given at Dingley Dell for Thursday Fortnight").

was in course of publication. "An archdeacon," he says, "with his own venerable lips repeated to me, the other night, a strange, profane story, of a solemn clergyman who had been administering ghostly consolation to a sick person; having finished, satisfactorily as he thought, and got out of the room, he heard the sick person ejaculate, 'Well, thank God, "Pickwick" will be out in ten days, anyway!'"

Feb. 13. Sam's Valentine.
" 14. The Trial — Bardell *v.* Pickwick.
" 16. Departure for, and arrival at Bath, "to stay two months."
" 17. Ball at the Assembly Rooms.
" 20. Mr. Pickwick moved to the Royal Crescent.
June 27. The "Third Morning after his Arrival." Arrest of Mr. Pickwick.
July 24. Arrest of Mrs. Bardell.
" 25. Mr. Pickwick leaves the Fleet Prison.
" 22. Arabella Allen married to Winkle.
" 26. Mr. Pickwick goes down to Bristol.
" 27. Goes to Birmingham.
" 28. At the Saracen's Head, Towcester.
" 29. Returns to Town.
Aug. 1. At Osborne's Hotel, Adelphi.
" 8. The Dinner at Osborne's.

Such a work defies criticism; yet it may be well to note the marvellous progress of Dickens's mind during the twenty months that he was engaged in its composition. In the earlier chapters, he evidently considered Pickwick, Winkle, Snodgrass, and Tupman as mere puppets, interesting only as they were made interesting by the humorous incidents in which they bear a part. The gradual process by which they become real men, and the incidents are made more humorous through their subordination to the development of character, is detected only by the most laborious scrutiny of the text.

The author was himself unconscious of the process, by which month after month, he converted caricatures into characterizations. In respect to Mr. Pickwick, he accounts for the change by declaring that "in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man who has anything whimsical about him generally impress us first, and that it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we usually begin to

look below those superficial traits, and to know the better part of him." This indicates the method by which Dickens ever afterwards considered his creations as actual beings, whose sayings he quoted as though they had not been put into their mouths by himself; but in the "Pickwick Papers" he exhibits some of them as growing, and not, as in his succeeding romances, as grown. In a vast majority of cases we may say that his characters are fixed from the moment he introduces them, and never depart from the limitations to which he has confined them, either in intellect or in conduct. The character is formed before he exhibits it on the scene, and all its expressions are almost mechanically true to its type.

In the "Pickwick Papers," the first example of his presentation of characters thoroughly matured is Mr. Wardle, of Manor Farm, Dingley Dell; then, in chapter x, we are introduced to Sam Weller; and finally, in chapter xx, we are made acquainted with

one of the great masterpieces of humorous genius, Tony Weller. In each of these cases the character is unchangeably formed, and all he says and does might be logically deduced from the character. Mr. Pickwick comes gradually into the same category, and Tupman, Winkle, and Snodgrass solidify by degrees, from personified jokes into human beings. There is a question whether Weller the son is superior or inferior to Weller the father; but no discriminating reader can fail to see that Sam's humor consists in what he says, while Tony's consists not so much in what he says as in what he *is*. Tony's mere bodily appearance, as surveyed by the eye of imagination, is more richly ludicrous than any of Sam's jokes; and when he does condescend to furnish us with a single maxim from his accumulated stores of wisdom, the remark owes nine tenths of its wit to our vivid conception of the person by whom it is uttered. Indeed, if we could conceive of a literary flood destroying almost all the inhabitants of

Dickens's ideal world, we think that Tony Weller would be sure to find a secure seat in the ark floating on the engulfing waters, snugly ensconced by the side of Mrs. Gamp, with her dilapidated umbrella spread over them as a kind of shelter from the pitiless rain.

Dickens followed in the "Pickwick Papers," the method of his favorite novelist, Smollett. In the "adventures" of Roderick Random and Peregrine Pickle the interest is purely biographical; there is, properly speaking, no plot. Certain things occur in the experiences of those scapegraces, and are recorded as they occur; still there is no attempt, as in the "Tom Jones" of Fielding, to make each incident or occurrence an important element in the main design of the story. But the humorous incidents in Dickens's narrative are distinguished from Smollett's by the absence of coarseness. Smollett doubtless represented the manners of his age in depicting scenes which make us laugh, and at the same time make us somewhat ashamed of the cause

of our laughter. The more literally true his descriptions are, the more he repels the taste. Besides, he had a misanthrope's delight in exhibiting human beings in situations which were as degrading as they were ludicrous. Dickens's immense animal spirits and his sense of comic situations might have been expected to drive him at times into violations of decorum if not of decency; but his imagination was so beautiful and humane that it allowed free course to his humorous spirit and invention, and still contained both spirit and invention within proper bounds for the production of humor at once beautiful and beneficent.

In the "Pickwick Papers" there are certain peculiarities of style, description, narrative, and characterization, which gradually deepened, in the novels which succeeded, into permanent traits of Dickens's genius. We shall notice these hereafter, when we come to those works in which they received their full development.

II

SKETCHES BY BOZ

THE first bit of original writing by Dickens which found its way into print was the sketch entitled "Mr. Minns and his Cousin." In its first form as "A Dinner at Poplar Walk" it was contributed to the "Monthly Magazine," where it appeared in December, 1833. Dickens was twenty-one years old at the time, and a newspaper reporter, but he had from early boyhood been observant of his destiny, and in the offering and publication of this sketch he enjoyed the familiar experience of the author conscious of his purpose, but heightening the effect of that consciousness when his memory was called on to reproduce the moment when he knocked at the door of Fate. He dropped his manuscript stealthily one evening "into a dark letter-box in a dark office up a dark court in Fleet Street," and when he had

bought the number of the magazine containing it, "walked down to Westminster Hall," he says, "and turned into it for half an hour because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there." One could wish, for the point it would make, that the happy young author on the threshold of his great career had turned aside into the cool retreat of Westminster Abbey, by that little postern door, through which so many have gone to look at his grave.

Four more papers followed the first in the same magazine in the winter and spring of 1834, all without any author's name, and then in August, 1835, when he printed "The Boarding-House," he appended to it the signature *Boz*. He has himself explained the origin of this pseudonym,[1] an abbreviation of Boses, a facetious variation of Moses, and he used it on the monthly parts of "Pickwick," which began to appear before the "Sketches" had been

[1] In the Preface to *Pickwick*

finished in their periodical form. Nine of these papers were contributed to the "Monthly Magazine," but they brought no return in money.

They did bring him to the notice, however, of Mr. George Hogarth, who was connected with the "Morning Chronicle," as was Dickens himself in the humble capacity of reporter. Mr. Hogarth was planning an evening edition of the paper, and invited Dickens to write a sketch for the first number. The letter which Dickens wrote in reply to the application was as follows:—

TO MR. GEORGE HOGARTH

13 FURNIVAL'S INN,
TUESDAY EVENING, TWENTIETH JANUARY, 1835.

MY DEAR SIR,—As you have begged me to write an original sketch for the first number of the new evening paper, and as I trust to your kindness to refer my application to the proper quarter, should I be unreasonably or improperly trespassing upon you, I beg to ask

whether it is probable that if I commenced a series of articles, written under some attractive title, for the "Evening Chronicle," its conductors would think I had any claim to *some* additional remuneration (of course, of no great amount) for doing so?

Let me beg of you not to misunderstand my meaning. Whatever the reply may be, I promised you an article, and shall supply it with the utmost readiness, and with an anxious desire to do my best, which I honestly assure you would be the feeling with which I shall always receive any request coming personally from yourself. I merely wish to put it to the proprietors, first, whether a continuation of light papers in the style of my "Street Sketches" would be considered of use to the new paper; and, secondly, if so, whether they do not think it fair and reasonable that, taking my share of the ordinary reporting business of the "Chronicle" besides, I should receive something for the papers beyond my ordinary salary as a reporter.

Begging you to excuse my troubling you, and taking this opportunity of acknowledging the numerous kindnesses I have already received at your hands since I have had the pleasure of acting under you,

I am, my dear Sir,

Very sincerely yours,

CHARLES DICKENS.

The personal feeling toward Mr. Hogarth which this letter intimates gathered an additional force doubtless from the circumstance that in this year he became engaged to Mr. Hogarth's daughter. His request was referred to the proprietor of the "Chronicle," and two guineas a week added to the salary of the young reporter, who was then receiving five guineas. Twenty sketches followed at intervals of a week or two, and four more constituted a brief series in the same paper in 1836. Meanwhile, he contributed a series of a dozen papers, with the signature *Tibbs*, to "Bell's Life in London" and the "Sporting Chronicle," and two

more, with his signature *Boz*, to the "Library of Fiction," started by Messrs. Chapman & Hall, who had already begun to issue "Pickwick" in monthly numbers. Thus the several sketches and scenes which now constitute "Sketches by Boz" found their first presentation in magazines and newspapers from December, 1833, to October, 1836.

When he came to collect his sketches for book publication, Dickens arranged them without regard to their original order and published them in two series, the first consisting of two volumes, published at the beginning of 1836, the second of one volume, published at the close of the same year. Both series were published by John Macrone, and on the 5th of January, 1837, Dickens gave Macrone a receipt in full for one hundred pounds paid him for the copyright of both series.

Meanwhile "Pickwick" had advanced as far as the appearance on the stage of Sam Weller, a character that at once gave a great impetus to the work, and Dickens was not only

engaged with Chapman & Hall in the serial publication of "Pickwick," but had signed a contract with Bentley for "Oliver Twist," and was at work on the novel when the volumes containing "Sketches by Boz" appeared. The tide of his popularity was rising fast, and Macrone, meaning to take advantage of it, proposed a reissue of the "Sketches" in monthly parts, letting his own craft thus take the wind which was filling the sails of "Pickwick" and "Oliver Twist." Dickens at once took alarm, and wrote as follows to his friend John Forster: —

"I heard half an hour an ago, on authority which leaves me in no doubt about the matter (from the binder of 'Pickwick,' in fact), that Macrone intends publishing a new issue of my 'Sketches' in monthly parts of nearly the same size and in just the same form as the 'Pickwick Papers.' I need not tell you that this is calculated to injure me most seriously, or that I have a very natural and most decided objection to being supposed to presume upon

the success of the 'Pickwick,' and thus foist this old work upon the public in its new dress for the mere purpose of putting money in my own pocket. Neither need I say that the fact of my name being before the town, attached to three publications at the same time, must prove seriously prejudicial to my reputation. As you are acquainted with the circumstances under which these copyrights were disposed of, and as I know I may rely on your kind help, may I beg you to see Macrone, and to state in the strongest and most emphatic manner my feeling on this point? I wish him to be reminded of the sums he paid for those books; of the sale he has had for them; of the extent to which he has already pushed them; and of the very great profits he must necessarily have acquired from them. I wish him also to be reminded that no intention of publishing them in this form was in the remotest manner hinted to me, by him or on his behalf, when he obtained possession of the copyright. I then wish you to put it to his feelings of common honesty

and fair dealings whether after this communication he will persevere in his intention."

Forster waited upon Macrone, who naturally did not see his own interest in any less strong light than Dickens saw his, and declined to alter his plans. As Dickens in his receipt had made over the entire copyright to Macrone "without any reserve whatever," he was not in a position to enforce his point that Macrone had not advised him of his intention, if indeed he had formed it when he bought the copyright. Accordingly Mr. Forster had recourse to another plan, and proposed to Macrone that he should sell back to Dickens all that he had bought. Macrone was ready to do this, but the price he named was so exorbitant that Forster at once advised Dickens to let the whole business alone. Dickens, however, was by this time so wrought up that the one thing essential seemed to him to get the copyright. Suspense of any kind, as Forster says, was intolerable to him, so the next day he wrote again to his friend: —

"I sent down just now to know whether you were at home (two o'clock), as Chapman & Hall were with me, and, the case being urgent, I wished to have the further benefit of your kind advice and assistance. Macrone & H—— (*arcades ambo*) waited on them this morning, and after a long discussion peremptorily refused to take one farthing less than the two thousand pounds. H—— repeated the statement of figures which he made to you yesterday, and put it to Hall whether he could say from his knowledge of such matters that the estimate of probable profit was exorbitant. Hall, whose judgment may be relied on in such matters, could not dispute the justice of the calculation. And so the matter stood. In this dilemma it occurred to them (my 'Pickwick' men), whether, if the 'Sketches' *must* appear in monthly numbers, it would not be better for them to appear for their benefit and mine conjointly than for Macrone's sole use and behoof; whether they, having all the 'Pickwick' machinery in full operation, could

not obtain for them a much larger sale than Macrone could ever get; and whether, even at this large price of two thousand pounds, we might not, besides retaining the copyright, reasonably hope for a good profit on the outlay. These suggestions having presented themselves, they came straight to me (having obtained a few hours' respite) and proposed that we should purchase the copyrights between us for the two thousand pounds, and publish them in monthly parts. I need not say that no other form of publication would repay the expenditure; and they wish me to explain by an address that *they*, who may be fairly put forward as the parties, have been driven into that mode of publication, or the copyrights would have been lost. I considered the matter in every possible way. I sent for you, but you were out. I thought of"— what need not be repeated, now that all is past and gone — "and consented. Was I right? I think you will say yes."

Forster, as a prudent counsellor, could not

grapher of Dickens, "being certainly quite inadequate to the claims of any writer of marked popularity."

The magazine, "Bentley's Miscellany," was started on the 1st of January, 1837; and in this magazine Dickens narrated the "Adventures of Oliver Twist."[1]

The impression derived from Forster's biography of Dickens is, that the latter was "self-sold into bondage" by his agreement with Bentley; that there was something wrong in holding him to the strict terms of the compact. The plain fact is, that Bentley, as a business man, was singularly astute in his early judgment of the capacities of Dickens's genius.

[1] It was claimed by the artist, George Cruikshank, after Dickens's death, that he was constructively the inventor of *Oliver Twist*, by designing plates which conveyed to Dickens the conception of characters and situations worked up by him into this novel. The claim, however, has been abundantly disproved, though the extraordinary vitality of Cruikshank's illustrations to the story, and their closeness to the notion which Dickens had, indicate a remarkable agreement between author and artist.

He was far ahead of all the literary critics of the time in foreseeing the enormous popularity of the man who, in the fifth number of "Pickwick," had simply brought into his somewhat disconnected story the character of Sam Weller, and had introduced him merely as a boot-black in a country inn, and as a racy commentator on the peculiarities of certain shoes and boots he cleaned. Chapman and Hall were paying the author, at this period, only fifteen guineas a number for "Pickwick," though they were willing, some time before it was finished, to offer nearly ten times as much for each number of "Nickleby." Bentley was therefore in the position of a capitalist who drives a good bargain with the discoverer of an undeveloped gold mine, or with the inventor of an unrecognized labor-doing machine. He palpably speculated on the possibilities of Dickens's genius, which he first clearly discerned, and not on its actual products at the time his contracts with him were made.

In all business arrangements, not literary, the compact between the parties is considered binding in equity as well as law; but in his compact with Bentley, Dickens, as soon as the conditions were changed, assumed a hysterical tone of complaint and objurgation. It was his good fortune, only a very few months after his engagements with Bentley were signed, to become the most popular author of his time. All publishers were ravenous to engage him at any price. In our opinion he should have practiced an austere economy, — written for Bentley what he had engaged to write for him before he had become not only famous, but "the rage," — and then, in the books he afterwards wrote, should have made as severe bargains with "the trade" as Bentley had made with him.

As a merchant of his literary wares, Dickens was, after his engagement with Bentley was broken, a most relentless man of business, exacting from publishers a full share of the profits of his works. If booksellers drink

their wine out of the skulls of authors, Dickens was ever anxious that the wine quaffed from *his* skull should be the thinnest of all varieties of *vin ordinaire*. No seller of Lake Shore or Michigan Central complains that the buyer, a few months after the sale, reaps a profit of ten or twenty per cent, owing to a sudden change in the rate charged by those roads for freight and passengers; but Dickens seems to have had a vague notion that a legal contract was not absolutely binding on him, when events which he had not foreseen proved that the other party to the contract was making a great deal of money while he was making comparatively little. In January, 1839, while chafing under the conditions of his agreement with Bentley, he wrote a letter to him, inclosed in one to John Forster, proposing to break the compact.

"I know," wrote Dickens to Forster, "you will endeavor to persuade me from sending it. Go it *must*. It is no fiction to say that I *cannot* write this tale [Barnaby Rudge]. The

immense profits which 'Oliver' has realized to its publisher, and is still realizing; the paltry, wretched, miserable sum it brought to me; the recollection of this, and the consciousness that I have the slavery and the drudgery of another work on the same journeyman-terms; the consciousness that my books are enriching everybody connected with them but myself, and that I, with such a popularity as I have acquired, am struggling in old toils, and wasting my energies in the very height and freshness of my fame, and the best part of my life, to fill the pockets of others, while for those who are nearest and dearest to me I can realize little more than a genteel subsistence: all this puts me out of heart and spirits. And I cannot — cannot and will not — under such circumstances, that keep me down with an iron hand, distress myself by beginning this tale [Barnaby Rudge] until I have had time to breathe; and until the intervention of summer, and some cheerful days in the country, shall have restored me to a more genial

and composed state of feeling. . . . I do most solemnly declare that morally, before God and man, I hold myself released from such hard bargains as these, after I have done so much for those who drove them. The net that has been wound about me so chafes me, so exasperates and irritates my mind, that to break it at whatever cost — *that* I should care nothing for — is my constant impulse."

Bentley seems to have behaved with a magnanimity uncommon in publishers. He consented to the rupture of the agreement, he released Dickens from his contract to write another tale, and made over to him in June, 1840, "the copyright of 'Oliver Twist,' and such printed stock as remained of the edition then on hand," for the sum of £2250. It is plain that he might have made double or treble this amount by insisting on his legal claims.

Dickens's irritation in respect to the original agreement breaks out as early as the fourteenth chapter of the book itself. Mr. Brownlow

asked Oliver if he should not like to be a book-writer. After a little consideration, Oliver replied that he thought it would be a much better thing to be a bookseller. Mr. Brownlow laughed, and said, "Don't be afraid! We won't make an author of you, while there's an honest trade to be learnt, or brickmaking to turn to."

"Oliver Twist" was the first of Dickens's romances which was subjected to the revision of his dear friend and biographer, John Forster, an accomplished man of letters, recently deceased. Forster read and suggested corrections to everything which Dickens afterwards wrote, and the text of "Oliver Twist" may be supposed to have specially engaged his critical sagacity, as it was the first story on which it was exercised. Yet the text of "Oliver Twist" is left in a slovenly condition, discreditable to both author and reviser. The reader needs to go no further than the opening paragraph to understand what we mean. The frequent use of the colon for the comma

in the punctuation of the narrative is particularly exasperating.[1]

[1] This last statement has reference of course to the punctuation of the first edition. Under what stress the book was written, how tangled it was with his other ventures, and how restless he was under the labor of writing it, may be gathered from Dickens's letters while the book was in progress and from Forster's life of the novelist. The book was begun before he had finished *Pickwick*. He was driving both with the printer at his heels. Not only that, but he was editing *Bentley's Miscellany*, preparing the *Life of Grimaldi* for the press, had written *Sunday under Three Heads* and *Sketches of Young Gentlemen*, all before the spring of 1838, and in April of that year began *Nicholas Nickleby* with six months more of *Oliver Twist* before him. On the 6th of March his first child was born. Three days later he wrote: "I was thinking about *Oliver* till dinner time yesterday, and, just as I had fallen upon him tooth and nail, was called away to sit with Kate. I did eight slips, however, and hope to make them fifteen this morning." "As the story shaped itself to its close," says Mr. Forster, "it took extraordinary hold of him. I never knew him work so frequently after dinner, or to such late hours (a practice he afterward abhorred), as during the final months of this task. . . . 'I worked pretty well last night,' he writes, referring to it in May, 'very well indeed; but although I did eleven close slips before half-past twelve, I have four to write, to complete the chapter; and as I foolishly left them till this morning, have the steam to get up

The plot of "Oliver Twist" is both improbable and melodramatic. It turns on the attempt of Monks, the regular scowling, mysterious, and stereotyped villain of the melodrama, to murder Oliver, his illegitimate younger brother, through the process of having him converted into a thief by Fagin, it being understood that a path will thus be opened for him to the gallows. Iago's statement of his motives for hating Othello may be, in Coleridge's phrase, "the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity"; but Monks is no Iago. A low, sneaking, and essentially cowardly rascal, he could hardly, on any reasonable view of his character, have devoted so much time, which might have been spent in profligacy, in hunting down the son of his mother's rival, especially as the will in that son's favor

afresh.'" Finally, in the first week of September he wrote: "My missis is going out to dinner, and I ought to go, but I have got a bad cold. So do you come and sit here, and read, or work, or do something, while I write the LAST chapter of *Oliver*, which will be arter a lamb chop."

had been destroyed. An uneasy sense, therefore, that Oliver had been swindled out of his own by a crime was, with his hereditary hate, the only inspiration of Monks in conspiring with such a treacherous rogue as Fagin for the purpose of demoralizing and eventually getting his brother hanged or transported. Such a character is possible, but it is not, for the purposes of romance, artistically probable. Yet few readers lose any interest in the "Adventures of Oliver Twist" through their perception of the clumsiness and improbability of the plot; for in this romance Dickens exhibited not merely his humor, but his command over the sources of pity and terror.

The pathos of the earlier chapters is brought out all the more effectively by its constant association with humor. There is something in the forlorn position of the boy, starved, beaten, helpless, and seemingly hopeless, which beseechingly appeals to the hearts of mothers; and by obtaining possession, thus early in his career, of the hearts of mothers, Dickens se-

cured an audience among the real rulers of families, and permanently domesticated himself at thousands of firesides. His own sufferings as a boy gave him an intimate acquaintance with the feelings of childhood and youth, of boyhood and girlhood; and by idealizing these in forms of character which had a plaintive reality to the mind, he gave to all his romances one element, at least, of constant interest. In little Oliver he availed himself of the usual privilege of dramatists and novelists, that of taking an exceptionally good character and placing him in exceptionally bad circumstances. Indeed, it requires much faith to believe that so delicately constituted a boy as Oliver could physically survive the beadle's thick stick and thin gruel; much more, perhaps, that he should preserve his refinement of feeling, his piety, and his keen sense of right, amid his vulgarizing and brutalizing surroundings. But the sympathies of the reader are so strongly addressed that he sees little incongruity in making the drudge of a work-

house, and the companion of thieves, talk and act like the good boys in "do-me-good" Sunday-school books. The pathos of the situation, indeed, is irresistible. When Oliver resists his tormentors, it is not because he has been outrageously beaten, but because the memory of his dead mother has been insulted; and when alone after the conflict, he falls upon his knees on the floor, hides his face in his hands, and sheds "such tears as, God send for the credit of our nature, few so young may ever have cause to pour out before Him." After he has resolved to run away, he looks out into the cold, dark night, and "the stars seem, to the boy's eyes, farther from the earth than he had ever seen them before"; a flash of imagination which reveals the full piteousness and desolation of his condition. He has one friend to leave, poor little consumptive Dick, his companion in misery; "they had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together, many and many a time"; and Oliver tells him, with an affectation of hope and cheer, that he shall see him

again, well and happy. "I hope so," replied the child. "After I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of heaven and angels, and kind faces, *which I never see when I am awake*. Kiss me," said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms around Oliver's neck. "Good-bye, dear! God bless you!" Such pathos may be called mawkish, but it is a mawkishness which has power to open hearts that are shut, and melt hearts that are hard.

Among the criminal population of the book two persons stand prominently forth: Fagin the Jew, and Bill Sikes. Fagin's soul is as yellow and shrivelled as his face; he is wicked to the very core of his being; he so much delights in crime that he establishes a sort of academy to teach boys the rudiments of vice and villainy; he gloats and chuckles over the debasement of their bodies and the damnation of their souls; and he is connected with humanity only by the craven fear which makes

him start and tremble even in his ecstasies of avarice and malignity. He belongs to the progeny of the devil by direct descent.[1] Sikes, in speculating on his genealogical tree, bluntly tells him, "There never was another man with such a face as yours, unless it was your father, and I suppose he is singeing his grizzled red beard by this time, unless you came straight from the old 'un without any father at all betwixt you; which I should n't wonder at, a bit."

When this creature is at last caught and caged, Dickens passes into that part of his nature which, however reluctantly, we must call

[1] Dickens once was taken severely to task by a Jewish lady for the injustice done to the race in this portraiture. In his reply he said: "Fagin, in *Oliver Twist*, is a Jew, because it unfortunately was true of the time to which that story refers, that that class of criminals almost invariably was a Jew. . . . I make mention of Fagin as the Jew, because he is one of the Jewish people, and because it conveys that kind of idea of him which I should give my readers of a Chinaman, by calling him a Chinese." Later, he sought to make the balance more even by drawing the portrait of the dignified, long-suffering Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*.

is great power displayed in the description of Sikes's flight afterwards with the phantom of his victim pursuing him, the "widely staring eyes, so lustreless and glassy," meeting his at every turn. Dickens when writing these scenes realized them so intensely that they may be said to have taken possession of him. When he read the account of the murder of Nancy to his wife, she became so affected that he describes her as being "in an unspeakable state." [1]

There are, in Mr. Fagin's seminary for the education of youth in theft and burglary, two promising pupils, Mr. John Dawkins (the

[1] When Dickens had been giving readings from his works for some time, the subjects being chiefly humorous or pathetic, he resolved to add this murder scene, and in preparing for it as well as in reading it he repeated the experience he had in writing. In a letter to Rev. W. Brookfield, May 24, 1863, he says: "I have been trying, alone by myself, the *Oliver Twist* murder, but have got something so horrible out of it that I am afraid to try it in public." He appears not to have tried it on a public audience until November, 1868. He gave a full account of the effect produced in a letter to Mrs. Fields, a month later. The strain which it wrought on him was very great.

Artful Dodger) and Master Charley Bates, who contribute much to the comedy of the book. Forster tells us that, on the evening when Dickens was writing the last chapter of the story, he and Talfourd were present at Dickens's house. "How well," he adds, "I remember that evening! and our talk of what should be the fate of Charley Bates, on behalf of whom (as indeed for the Dodger, too) Talfourd had pleaded as earnestly in mitigation of judgment as ever at the bar for any client he had most respected." Although Charley Bates is ever laughing, the Dodger is by far the funnier person of the two. The comical dignity with which he wears the honors of his profession, the lofty view he takes of it as a means of livelihood, his perfect content with the position in society it gives him, and the inimitable swagger and assurance which mark his general deportment, have lifted him to a high humorous rank among the numerous astonishing juvenile scapegraces that Dickens has drawn. When arrested as a pickpocket, and

put in the dock for examination, he requests to know "what he was placed in that 'ere disgraceful sitivation for"; points to the magistrates, and asks the jailer to communicate to him "the names of them two files as was on the bench"; complains that his attorney is "a-breakfasting this morning with the Wice-President of the House of Commons"; and, when asked if he has any question to put to the witness against him, loftily replies that he "would n't abase himself by descending to hold no conversation with him." After he is committed, he turns to the magistrates and exclaims, "Ah! it 's no use your looking frightened; I won't show you no mercy, not a ha'porth of it. *You 'll* pay for this, my fine fellers. I would n't be you for something!" And as he goes off, he threatens to make a Parliamentary business of it.

The impudent little rascal so wins upon the humorous sympathies of the reader that many others besides Talfourd have felt like speaking a mitigating word for him to the bench.

The scenes in which Mr. Bumble, the beadle, appears, are full both of humor and of pathos, — the humor coming from the pomposity with which he executes the "duties" of his high office, and the pathos from the sufferings of his victims. Mr. Bumble is the impersonation of the abuses of the English parochial system in the management of the poor: a sycophant to those above him, a tyrant to those below him, mean, stupid, greedy, hypocritical, cowardly, and unfeeling, big in body as becomes his station, small in soul as becomes the doing of its business, and endowed with a colossal conceit which serves him in the place of conscience and gives him supreme self-satisfaction and self-approval in his daily performance of acts of cruelty and injustice. But he is made by Dickens as ridiculous as he is heartless. When the half-starved Oliver rises against his tormentors, those who have beaten the boy almost to death refer the sudden exhibition of his spirit to madness. On Mrs. Sowerby's communicating this theory to Mr. Bumble, he,

after a few moments of deep meditation, replies, "It 's not Madness, ma'am; it 's Meat." When a jury brings in a verdict that one of his paupers died of exposure to the cold and want of the common necessaries of life, he is naturally indignant. "'Juries,' said Mr. Bumble, grasping his cane tightly, as was his wont when working into a passion, 'juries is ineddicated, vulgar, grovelling wretches.'" He tells Mrs. Mann, who conducts a farm for the raising of pauper children, that he "inwented" the idea of naming the foundlings of the workhouse in alphabetical order. "'The last,' he says, 'was a S, — Swubble, I named him. This was a T, — Twist, I named *him*. The next one as comes will be Unwin, and the next Vilkins. I have got names ready-made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again when we come to Z.' 'Why, you are quite a literary character, sir!" said the admiring Mrs. Mann. 'Well, well,' replied the beadle, 'perhaps I may be. Perhaps I may be, Mrs. Mann.'"

When, towards the end of the book, his knavery is on the point of exposure, he cringes to the party assembled at Mr. Brownlow's with a hypocritical sycophancy which is deliciously absurd and awkward. "'Do my hi's deceive me!' he exclaims, 'or is that little Oliver? . . . Can't I be supposed to feel — *I* as brought him up porochially — when I see him a-setting here among ladies and gentlemen of the very affablest description? I always loved that boy as if he'd been my — my — my own grandfather! . . . Master Oliver, my dear, you remember the blessed gentleman in the white waiscoat? Ah! he went to heaven last week, in a oak coffin with plated handles, Oliver.'"

Mr. Bumble is not a father, but if it had pleased Dickens to give him a son, nobody could have filled that position more appropriately than the charity boy of the novel, Noah Claypole, the most consummate of all actual or possible sneaks.

Dickens, in his preface to "Oliver Twist,"

replies with some heat to those "refined and delicate people" who had objected to his introduction of such creatures as Fagin and Sikes and Nancy into the book, as equally offensive to good morals and good taste. After justifying his selection of such persons for romantic treament, he bluntly tells his censors that he has no respect for their opinion, does not covet their approval, and does not write for their amusement. "I venture," he adds, "to say this without reserve; for I am not aware of any writer in our language having a respect for himself, or held in any respect by his posterity, who has ever descended to the taste of this fastidious class." Certainly the reading of "Oliver Twist" can corrupt nobody. The representation of criminals is vivid and true, but what is wicked is nowhere associated with what is alluring, and the moral tone and purpose are frequently inartistically obvious. The morality of the novel is not only sound, but the moral taste of the writer, his fine sense of what is becoming, prevents him from put-

ting into the mouths of his criminal characters language which would be appropriate to them, — language which Fielding and Smollett would not have hesitated to use, but which the manners of our day have banished from contemporary books. That he should have portrayed such characters in their hideous reality, and still should have denied to them their favorite outlets of expression in ribaldry and blasphemy, proves both his skill in characterization and his instinctive perception of the verbal proprieties demanded by modern taste. Dickens, however, was never on more perilous ground than in this novel; and that he escaped certain dangers inherent in its design is evident from the failure of a host of imitators, whom his success stimulated, to make their romances of rascality either morally or artistically justifiable.

IV

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

THE first number of the "Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby" was published on the morning of the first of April, 1838. The author's heart was gladdened, on the festal evening that followed, with the intelligence that fifty thousand copies were ordered or sold on the day of publication. The rapid growth of Dickens's reputation is indicated by the difference between his verbal agreement with Chapman & Hall as to the price to be paid for "Pickwick," and the formal document which records his stipulations with the same publishers as to the sum to be paid for "Nickleby." For "Pickwick" he was to receive fifteen guineas a number, to be increased if the speculation proved successful. Thirty guineas were advanced to him to defray the expenses of his

marriage, on April 2, 1836, with Catherine Hogarth, the eldest daughter of George Hogarth, a gentleman who had been associated with him in literary work for the "London Evening Chronicle." Instead of three hundred guineas, Chapman & Hall paid him, for "Pickwick," £3000, according to the statement of Mr. Chapman, or £2500, according to the more accurate statement of Mr. Forster, it being understood that Dickens was further to receive a share in the copyright after five years had elapsed. For "Nickleby" the publishers agreed to pay him £150 for each of the twenty numbers, giving him also a share in the copyright five years after its completion; and so strong was now the competition of other publishers with Chapman & Hall, that the latter paid an additional £1500 for "Nickleby," in order that they might secure the right to publish his next work, "Master Humphrey's Clock."

During the composition of "Nickleby," Dickens was in a high state of physical and

mental exhilaration. He indulged lavishly in walks, rides, and athletic sports which would have exhausted the physical energy of most men of letters, — the energy on which intellectual creativeness more or less depends.

Our great American romancer, Nathaniel Hawthorne, complained to Dr. Holmes, who is an accomplished physiologist as well as a poet and novelist, that his long, delightful forenoon walks through the beautiful scenery of the Berkshire Hills incapacitated him for literary effort. "The reason is plain," said Holmes; "do your true work after breakfast; take your exercise when it is done. Your early walks tire your mind as well as your body. Your power of intellectual production is weakened with every expenditure of nervous force in aimless wandering over hills and meadows." Emerson struck at the same general conditions of mental efficiency when he declared that "there is an infatuating sweetness in the air of the mountains which lures the *idler* on to his sure destruction." But Dickens

was so physically strong, so ebullient, so furious, in animal spirits, and at the same time was so haunted with the creations of his imagination, that nearly half of the day or night spent in walking, bar-leaping, bowling, and quoits, was necessary to preserve the sanity of his mental constitution. The intoxication which accompanied his vivid, mirthful conceptions, the depression which followed his intense realization of pathetic and tragic incidents, demanded physical exercise as a corrective of the hallucinations of his imagination. His spontaneous creativeness required to be tired and tamed by bodily exertion before it could hope to become creative art; and walks of fifteen or twenty miles often failed so to weary out his animal energy as to keep his creativeness within the bounds which separate realization from exaggeration and character from caricature.

In writing "Nickleby" Dickens always had, in Forster's phrase, "the printer at his heels." In this story he was never a single

number ahead, but trusted to inspiration and luck that he would be ready with copy at the appointed time. In the romances that followed, he was generally careful to be two or three numbers in advance of his monthly engagement. His private letters at this period boil over with boyish, exulting, irrepressible jocularity and glee. They remind us of Campbell's remark in regard to what must have been Shakespeare's mood of mind while writing "A Midsummer Night's Dream." "Thank God," said Campbell, "there was at one time on this miserable planet at least one man who was perfectly happy."

In a letter directed from an inn in Exeter, Dickens describes a visit from an upholsterer in this rollicking vein: "I think they took me here at New London for the Wonderful Being I am; they were amazingly sedulous; and no doubt they looked for my being visited by the nobility and gentry of the neighborhood. My first and only visitor came to-night; a ruddy-faced man in faded black, *with*

extracts from a feather bed all over him; an extrordinary and quite miraculously dirty face; a thick stick; and the personal appearance altogether of an amiable bailiff in a green old age. I have not seen the proper waiter since, *and more than suspect I shall not recover this blow.* He was announced (by *the* waiter) as 'a person.' I expect my bill every minute. . . . The waiter is laughing outside the door with another waiter; this is the latest intelligence of my condition."

The reader will easily detect in the passages we have italicized the characteristics of Dickens's drollery, — the instinctive and transforming operation of his humorous fancy on the slightest hint from observation or experience. He was, indeed, during the twenty months consumed in writing the "Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby," a happy husband, a happy father, and a happy man of genius; rejoicing in everything which could make life pleasant, with intervals which raised enjoyment to the point of ecstasy; happy in

his home, happy in the sense of suddenly acquired fame, happy in the love and admiration of many personal and intimate friends, and happy likewise in a host of well-wishers who were magnetized by his genius, who were drawn to him by sympathy though most of them never looked upon his face, and who afterwards clung to him, through good and evil report, as a great "Public," whose affection nothing that he said or did, and nothing that malignant scandal reported of his sayings and doings, could alter or alienate. So entirely did he taste the richest, finest and most satisfying delight which springs from what may be called the vanity of genius, so completely did he convert his readers into personal friends and champions, that Thackeray once said, in private conversation, "Dickens might commit any crime without losing a single reader. Scandal-mongers may forge any number of accusations against him of immorality, and still moral England will stand by him to a man and to a woman." The acutest of ob-

servers thus indicated his perception of the overwhelming vitality of nature by which Dickens may be said to have Dickensized his public.

Other contemporary romances addressed powerfully certain classes, or certain classes of minds; Dickens forced all classes into some sympathy, instinctive or reluctant, with his own creations, in spite of certain solid critical objections to his general method of representing character, and to the doubtful contrivances upon which he sometimes relied to call forth laughter and tears. Many cultivated people laughed and cried against the rules they had set up to direct their laughter and crying, and were sometimes indignant at their weakness in yielding to such "vulgar" temptations to mirth and sorrow as Dickens supplied; but still they could not help laughing and crying at his bidding. In the opinion of some cool, hard, resisting minds, it was provoking that an ignorant young fellow of twenty-seven should attain the throne of romance at a

bound, and as an absolute sovereign should issue ordinances for the regulation of society based, not on large reason and wide experience, but on the shifting requirements of philanthropic sentiment. It must be admitted that Dickens was ignorant of much that a genius so aggressive as well as so bright should have known; but the vividness of his perception of the particular evil or abuse he assailed, and the immense resources of humor, pathos, and passion he exhibited in holding it up to public ridicule or execration, triumphed over every obstacle that the jurist or economist could interpose.

The style of "Nicholas Nickleby" has more ease, simplicity, and spontaneousness than that of most of its successors. With fewer verbal felicities and ingenuities wrought into the substance of the diction, it has a fluency, pliancy, and buoyancy of movement admirably adapted to the requirements of such a narrative. Many chapters bear the marks of having been written with joyous rapidity; but

the haste was evidently the result of the impatient pressure of inventiveness upon expression, leaving no time for those pauses of reflection to which Dickens commonly owes most of his happiest phrases and wittiest verbal combinations. There is hardly more plot in this novel than in the "Pickwick Papers." It is literally, as the author calls it, the "Life and *Adventures* of Nicholas Nickleby," and its merit lies rather in the succession than in the combination of incidents and characters. The mere story might easily have been told in one number; in the hands of such a master of swift, compact, and brilliant narrative as Voltaire, it would hardly have occupied a page; but what interests us in "Nicholas Nickleby" is not so much the story as the crowd of persons to whom we are introduced, and whom the writer has the art of converting into our personal acquaintances. It is useless to object that many of them are overcharged in the representation, and seem to have been delineated while the author was in a kind of hilarious

mental intoxication, laughing himself with heartier violence than he makes his readers laugh; for the hold on character is firm, even when its peculiarities seem exaggerated into caricature, and the persons are accepted by us as real human beings, though we feel that the mode of representing them is droll to the point of extravagance.

A more serious objection to Dickens's method is that he so turns his characters "inside out"; he makes them betray themselves so thoroughly, that we wonder how his cheats and pretenders can deceive anyhody. Squeers, for example, is so repulsive, physically, mentally and morally, that a parent of the least discernment would as soon trust a child to a wolf as to him. To vary an old saying, charlatan, swindler and ruffian were so legibly imprinted by God Almighty on his countenance, that "it would be impiety to doubt the superscription." To prevent any possible misconception of his character, his school is called Dotheboys Hall. In his advertisement he

states that youth are there "instructed in all languages, living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of the globes, algebra, single stick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature."[1]

[1] The incisiveness with which Dotheboys Hall was scored had the effect, as Dickens himself has shown in one of his prefaces, of making more than one Yorkshire school fit the cap to its own head. M. H., a writer in the London *Athenæum* for January 20, 1894, under the caption "Dickens in Yorkshire," recounts what he calls the Dickens legend as set forth in Murray's *Handbook for Yorkshire*, and embroidered in the biography of the artist C. W. Cope, and proceeds to reduce it to a very few simple facts. He was followed by J. Power Hicks in the same journal the next week, by C. B., Robert Blair, and A. S. in the *Athenæum* for February 3, and returns to the subject in the number for February 10, where J. M. Richardson and J. D. also throw their little sticks on the fire. The gist of the whole matter seems to be that, as Dickens's letters show, he spent two nights at Barnard Castle early in February, devoting himself during his short stay to an active exploration of the neighborhood; that a Mr. Humphreys, a watchmaker, procured him admission to schools in Bowes and elsewhere, to a Mr. Shaw's among the number, and that whether rightly or wrongly Shaw suffered seriously from the identification of himself with Squeers. This

This is very funny, and the stroke about single stick (if required) keenly humorous; but what simpleton would be taken in by such palpable ignorance and impudence? Dickens's object was to level a deadly blow at the whole system of cheap schools in Yorkshire, where boys were said to be cruelly treated by brutal schoolmasters. Some rumors of this treatment had excited his indignation when he was himself a boy; and before writing "Nickleby" he made a visit to Yorkshire for the purpose of personally examinining the schools. While there he probably made the acquaintance of a pedagogue who furnished him the hint for Squeers. But surely the schoolmasters as a body had sufficient sense to employ somebody to draw up advertisements which were not a jumble of illiterate absurdities, and sufficient hypocrisy to make a decent show of human feeling; whereas Squeers exposes his ignor-

identification seems to have sprung chiefly from some slight personal likeness between the two, and from the close likeness between the exterior of Shaw's school and that described in Nicholas Nickleby.

ance, knavery and brutality in every word he utters. If it be said that his pupils were mostly confined to boys that parents were ashamed to own, or that guardians were desirous of getting out of the way, still this could not be the case with all the pupils of all the schools. There must have been, on the part of the schoolmasters, some hypocrisy which imposed on the credulity of parents and guardians, and Squeers, as represented by Dickens, could impose on nobody. Yet Squeers is a character and not a caricature; his continual self-exposure of his baseness, greediness, ferocity and depravity is almost hidden from himself by self-conceit; and experience shows that creatures such as he exist, though they are too completely immoral to mimic morality with any success.[1]

[1] While the book was appearing serially, a little boy named Hastings Hughes wrote to Dickens, stating what rewards and punishments should, in his opinion, be meted out to the several characters, and Dickens made the following grave reply: —

DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON, Dec. 12, 1838.

RESPECTED SIR, — I have given Squeers one cut on the neck and two on the head, at which he ap-

A prominent figure in the novel is Ralph Nickleby; but he is portrayed from the outside, and hardly reaches real individuality, being a kind of personified abstraction of avarice and malignity. His heart and soul are as

peared much surprised and began to cry, which, being a cowardly thing, is just what I should have expected from him — would n't you?

I have carefully done what you told me in your letter about the lamb and the "two sheeps" for the little boys. They have also had some good ale and porter, and some wine. I am sorry you did n't say *what* wine you would like them to have. I gave them some sherry, which they liked very much, except one boy who was a little sick and choked a good deal. He was rather greedy, and that 's the truth, and I believe it went the wrong way, which I say served him right, and I hope you 'll say so too.

Nicholas had his roast lamb, as you said he was to, but he could not eat it all, and says if you do not mind his doing so he should like to have the rest hashed to-morrow with some greens, which he is very fond of, and so am I. He said he did not like to have his porter hot, for he thought it spoilt the flavor: so I let him have it cold. You should have seen him drink it. I thought he would never have left off. I also gave him three pounds of money, all in sixpences, to make it seem more, and he said directly that he should give more than half to his mamma and sister, and divide the rest with poor Smike. And I say he

impenetrable to the author as to the reader. Dickens never succeeded in giving vitality to such hard forms of character. In his novels

is a good fellow for doing so; and if anybody says he is n't I am ready to fight him whenever they like — there!

Fanny Squeers shall be attended to, depend upon it. Your drawing of her is very like, except that I don't think the hair is quite curly enough. The nose is particularly like hers, and so are the legs. She is a nasty disagreeable thing, and I know it will make her very cross when she sees it; and what I say is that I hope it may. You will say the same, I know — at least I think you will.

I meant to have written you a long letter, but I cannot write very fast when I like the person I am writing to, because that makes me think about them, and I like you, and so I tell you. Besides, it is just eight o'clock at night, and I always go to bed at eight o'clock, except when it is my birthday, and then I sit up to supper. So I will not say anything more besides this — and that is my love to you and Neptune; and if you will drink my health every Christmas Day I will drink yours — come.

I am,
Respected Sir,
Your affectionate friend,
CHARLES DICKENS.

P. S. — I don't write my name very plain, but you know what it is, you know, and so never mind.

they appear as they appear on the Exchange, mere petrifactions of men, and we miss the insight which should reveal their inward natures. Arthur Gride, on the contrary, though as villainous and miserly as Ralph, is of a more supple constitution of mind, and becomes a character through his cowardice, his sickly, impotent voluptuousness, the nervous eagerness of his greed, and the rapid alternations of his central rascality between the fears and raptures of avarice. He is, however, too disgusting and detestable a creature for the purposes of romance; Madeline, the heroine of the book, receives a stain by having her image fondled and pawed upon in the foul imagintion of this satyr-usurer; and the commonplace expedient of making her consent to marry him in order to save a father from want is an exaggerated form of criminal self-sacrifice copied from the worst models of the worst sentimental novelists.

The strength of Dickens in characterization is in seizing and setting forth the oddities,

singularities, and eccentricities of character, without exactly individualizing any special trait. In the present novel, as in all his novels, there are some excellent satirical sketches, in which we obtain a passing glimpse of persons who are in no sense characters, and who are introduced merely to give point and sting to the satire. Such is the account of the meeting to organize the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. "Sir Matthew Pupker," says Mr. Bonney, "takes the chair, and three members of Parliament are positively coming. I have seen two of them safely out of bed. The third, who was at Crockford's all night, has just gone home to put a clean shirt on, and take a bottle or two of soda water, and will certainly be with us in time to address the meeting. He is a little excited by last night, but never mind that; he always speaks the stronger for it." The speeches that follow are capital parodies of that peculiar kind of eloquence which is used to push the

schemes of financial swindlers, but the natures of the impostors who speak are as much hidden as they intend their motives shall be. Dickens's experience as a reporter seems to have resulted in giving him an unfavorable opinion of most members of the House of Commons, and he rarely introduces one into his books except to make him a mark for his animosity and contempt. In the sixteenth chapter of the novel he describes Mr. Gregsbury as "a tough, burly, thick-headed gentleman, with a loud voice, a pompous manner, a tolerable command of sentences with no meaning in them, and, in short, every requisite for a very good member indeed"; and the account of the reception this personified platitude gives to his swindled constituents, and the statement of his interview afterwards with Nicholas, are full of pungent satire; but Mr. Gregsbury himself still remains nothing more than a racily impersonated jest.

Again, Nicholas Nickleby, the hero, though a brave, honest, affectionate and high-spirited

young fellow, is but a thin and poor specimen of characterization. The same must be said of Kate Nickleby and Madeline Bray. At this early period of his career, Dickens could not give to the good young women he took for heroines the impressive individuality he afterwards proved himself capable of conferring upon Little Dorrit, Esther Summerson, and Lucie Manette. Under the detecting touch and delicate fashioning of Jane Austen's genius, Kate and Madeline would have stood forth as real characters, interesting for what they were in themselves as well as for what they suffered and did, with every nice peculiarity which distinguished them from other good young women subtly indicated. In Miss Edgeworth's hands they would at least have been gifted with vigorous individuality. But as drawn by Dickens they seem introduced for the purpose of illustrating Pope's maxim that "most women have no characters at all." We become instantly conscious of this defect when we contrast them with such specimens

of feminine nature as Fanny Squeers and 'Tilda Price, who have peculiarities and singularities on which their delineator can fasten, and he accordingly endows them with such life and individuality that they appear to start up and out from the page, so that we seem to see and listen to them, rather than to read *about* them.

It is necessary to make such distinctions as these, in order to discriminate between Dickens's solid characters, his characters which are perceived as both inwardly and outwardly alive, and his hints of character, his sketches of character, and his satires on personified abuses and vices, all of which are equally endowed with proper names, and appear in his books as persons.

There are, in the novel of "Nicholas Nickleby," many delightful examples of Dickens's real power and felicity of characterization. Mrs. Nickleby is a very foolish old lady, and we have perhaps too much of her conversation, but the conceit and vanity which mingle

with her simplicity and affectionateness, the helpless incapacity of her mind to resist accidental associations of ideas, and her self-delusion in insisting, after a thing has happened, that she predicted or produced it, almost make her the ideal standard of the class of women to which she belongs. At least nobody doubts either her originality or her existence,[1] and nobody doubts the existence and originality of Newman Noggs, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Crummles, the Phenomenon, Miss Snevellicci, Mantalini, Miss Knag, Miss La Creevy, Mr. and Mrs. Kenwigs, Mr. Lillyvick, Tim Linkinwater, John Browdie, not to mention a score of others; and the scenes and incidents in which they appear are richly humorous. These persons pushed their way at once into the imaginations of all classes of the public, and were more warmly welcomed than most actual friends and neighbors.

[1] Mr. Dickens's son states that "there was more than a hint in some of Mrs. Nickleby's long stories and speeches of certain peculiarities of the author's mother."

Whilst the work was in course of publication, Sydney Smith invited Dickens to meet at dinner some ladies who were enthusiastic admirers of his genius. "My friends," Sydney jocosely added, "have not the smallest objection to be put into a number, but on the contrary would be proud of the distinction; and Lady Charlotte, in particular, you may marry to Newman Noggs." Leigh Hunt declared that Fanny Squeers's letter to Ralph Nickleby, giving her account of the way that Nicholas had, in John Browdie's phrase, "beatten the schoolmeasther," surpassed the best things of the kind in Smollett that he could remember; and certain it is that if Winifred Jenkins suggested to Fanny the rules of English composition, the pupil far excelled the teacher in carrying them out. "'My pa,' she begins, 'requests me to write to you, the doctors considering it doubtful whether he will ever recuvver the use of his legs which prevents his holding a pen. . . . When your nevew that you recommended for a teacher had done

this to my pa and jumped upon his body with his feet and also langwedge which I will not pollewt my pen with describing, he assaulted my ma with dreadful violence, dashed her to the earth, and drove her back comb several inches into her head. . . . I am screaming out loud all the time I write and so is my brother which takes off my attention rather and I hope will excuse mistakes. The monster having sasiated his thirst for blood ran away taking with him a desperate caracter that he had excited to rebellyon, and a garnet ring belonging to my ma, and not having been apprehended by the constables is supposed to have been took up by some stage coach. . . . P. S. I pity his ignorance and despise him.'"

The postscript probably is a dark allusion to the circumstance that Fanny had once lavished on this unappreciating monster the whole wealth of her young affections.

The pathos of the book centres in poor Smike. This character was the first result of a series of psychological studies, in which

Dickens attempted to give an accurate representation of unsound or imperfectly developed intellects when united to gentleness of temper and goodness of heart. The harmlessness and helplessness of Smike, the fortitude with which he endures brutal treatment, the innocent wonder with which he receives from Nicholas the first intimations that there exist people who can be kind and compassionate, the depth of his affection for his benefactors, the gleams of memory and reason which occasionally shoot across the vacancy of his mind, the awakening and growth, through the tender pity of Kate, of the sentiment of love in his nature, and the broken-hearted prayer with which he sinks into the rest of death, all combine to lend to the character a peculiar pathetic interest. Forster tells us that so strong was the sympathy felt for Smike, that, during the serial publication of the novel, the author received as many letters imploring him not to kill him, as had been sent by young ladies to Richardson to spare "Lovelace's soul alive,"

or, as he might have added, to spare the life of Lovelace's victim, Clarissa herself.

The device of Dickens to strike at the inmost soul of Ralph Nickleby, and compel him to feel some pang of remorse, by furnishing him with the proof that the poor lad he had hounded on to death was his own son, seems to have been suggested by Victor Hugo's "Notre-Dame"; but the dull agony of Ralph is as nothing compared to the overwhelming intensity of anguish which rends the heart of the mother of Esmeralda, when she discovers too late that the girl she has always been persecuting is the daughter she has always been seeking.

"Nicholas Nickleby" ranks with the most popular of Dickens's works, though it does not adequately embody the deeper qualities of his genius. It must be kept in mind that up to the publication of "David Copperfield" his whole nature steadily grew, and that this growth was a growth in all his faculties and all his sentiments. What charms most readers

in "Nicholas Nickleby" is the breezy, buoyant, external, out-of-door feeling which animates the narrative, the quick succession of exciting incidents, the apparently instinctive skill with which the characters are grouped, the cheerful, hopeful, humane spirit which breathes through the book; but there is a comparative absence of the intense "inwardness" which afterwards so strikingly marked the writer's genius, — of that imaginative power which penetrated every description of outward nature, every house and every piece of furniture in it, with the life of the mental mood in which the object was surveyed. The popularity of "Nicholas Nickleby," however, is richly deserved. If the fun of the work makes its readers feel happier, its benevolent spirit makes them feel better. The loving portrayal of the Cheeryble Brothers anticipates and answers some of the objections made by socialists to the distribution of wealth. The goodness of the Cheerybles is not without a certain taint of do-me-good-ness, and some experienced men

of business are, we understand, daily looking for their names in the bankrupt's gazette; but still their brotherly feeling, not merely to each other, but to all mankind, has taken a strong hold on the sympathies of most readers, and their characters are constantly referred to as realizing the ideal perfection of the beneficence of the *bourgeois*.

V

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

In July, 1839, before "Nicholas Nickleby" was concluded, Dickens conceived the idea of a weekly publication, price threepence, on the general plan of the "Spectator," the "Tatler," and Goldsmith's "Bee." "I should propose," he says in a letter to Forster, "to start, as the 'Spectator' does, with some pleasant fiction relative to the origin of the publication; to introduce a little club or knot of characters, and to carry their personal histories and proceedings through the work; to introduce fresh characters constantly; to reintroduce Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, the latter of whom might furnish an occasional communication with great effect; to write amusing essays on the foibles of the day as they arise; to take advantage of all passing events; and to vary the form of the papers by throwing them into

sketches, essays, tales, adventures, letters from imaginary correspondents and so forth, so as to diversify the contents as much as possible." A particular series of satirical papers was to be devoted to the administration of justice in England, the object being "to keep a special lookout upon the magistrates in town and country, and never to leave these worthies alone." He also contemplated a visit to Ireland or the United States, writing thence for the publication descriptions of places and people he saw, and introducing localities, traditions, and legends. He thought, in addition, of employing other writers to some extent, but their contributions were to be under his exclusive supervision, and they were to carry out his ideas.

The agreement with Chapman & Hall for the work was signed in March, 1840. They were to pay him £50 for each weekly number; this sum was to be paid him as part of the expenses of the publication; and, of the profits of each number over expenses, he was to

receive one half. Forster says that the terms of the agreement "were such as to place him in his only proper and legitimate position in regard to all such contracts, of being necessarily a gainer in any case, and, in the event of success, the greatest gainer of all concerned in the undertaking." "This proper and legitimate position" of the author is an ideal which few authors except Dickens ever realized. As Chapman & Hall also paid an additional £1500 for "Nickleby" in order to obtain the privilege of publishing the work proposed, and as the loss which might occur on any particular number was not to be carried to the general profit and loss account, but was to be assumed by them, Dickens may be said to have driven with them a peculiarly hard bargain.

The title of the new serial was "Master Humphrey's Clock." The first weekly number was published in April, 1840, and nearly seventy thousand copies were sold, — the receipts, at the retail price, being £875; but

the public expectation, having been extravagantly raised, was doomed to sudden disappointment, and the orders for the ensuing numbers rapidly fell off. Indeed, "Master Humphrey's Clock," with the exception of the scenes where the Wellers are introduced, is the feeblest of Dickens's writings. It is, indeed, forcibly-feeble, — the writer's straining after effect being apparent in all the ineffectiveness of the result. Though he did not give up the original plan of the work without a pang, he saw that it would not succeed; and the story of Little Nell, which he at first intended as a comparatively short narrative, he expanded into the romance of the "Old Curiosity Shop," and achieved one of the greatest triumphs of his life. Both this story and that of "Barnaby Rudge," though published under Master Humphrey's name, owed none of their success to any magic suggested by the general title.

The plot of the "Old Curiosity Shop" turns on the avarice and malignity of Quilp, one of the worst specimens of Dickens's utterly

depraved villains. Hideous both in body and mind, this demon-brute hates everybody — the old grandfather, Little Nell, Swiveller, Trent, Kit Nubbles, even the knave-lawyer Brass, whom he employs as his tool. He especially abhors virtue and goodness. "I hate your virtuous people!" he exclaims; "ah! I hate 'em every one!" The sufferings of others, whether they are his victims or his instruments, fill him with exultation; he witnesses their torments with a diabolical glee; and his wit, under such circumstances, bites and burns like the scalding rum he pours down his throat.

In all Dickens's delineations of persons who are at war with their kind, his amiable and benevolent feelings get the better of his imaginative insight; he introduces the doctrine of total depravity into the sphere of imaginative representation; in short, he thoroughly vulgarizes villainy; and we miss the spiritual element which enters into the natures of the villains of Shakespeare and Scott, and which endows Richard and Iago, Varney and Rashleigh Os-

baldistone, with a certain dignity of depravity. Quilp is physically and morally a physical and moral monster; an essentially low villain; the villain as conceived by the mind of the benevolent *bourgeois;* the villain whose adventures are recorded in criminal courts.

There is indeed a kind of aristocracy in evil as in good. The aristocracy of evil, as delineated either by Dante, Milton, and Byron, or by Shakespeare and Scott, enjoy the privileges of a sort of Satanic peerage. Their wickedness is lifted above sensuality, and partakes of the vague grandeurs of the strong individual soul, in hopeless rebellion against Omnipotent Good, but still spiritual in essence, and concentrating all its evil life in a finite spiritual will that revolts against the Supreme Will,—the Will that, in the energetic words of Dr. South, "willed heaven and earth out of nothing, and can, when it pleases, will them into nothing again."

Dickens, from his constant piety in worshipping a God whose characteristic is an in-

witnessing the arrests of his father for debt, and from his after observations as a lawyer's clerk and reporter, imbibed an intense detestation of the whole race of pettifogging attorneys; and in his books he exhibits only a sort of contemptuous toleration even for lawyers in the front rank of their profession. No humorist, indeed, has exceeded him in representing the unreality which enters, more or less, into all speech-making, whether social, political, or legal; but in Mr. Sampson Brass he has humorously individualized his hatred of that lower class of attorneys, who get their living out of the miseries of the impecunious, and who are ready to commit any mean crime to gratify the greed or malice of greater rogues than themselves, namely, their employers. The humor in the delineation of Brass comes from the pomposity of his posing in his assumed character as an honest man. "I respect you, Kit," he says to the poor boy he is paid to entrap and ruin; "your station is humble, and your fortune lowly. It is n't the waistcoat that I look

at. It is the heart. The checks in the waistcoat are but the wires of the cage. But the heart is the bird." "Christopher," he says again, "I lost forty-seven pound ten by being honest this morning. . . . The still, small voice," he smilingly adds, tapping himself on his bosom, "is a-singing comic songs within me, and all is happiness and joy." When Kit falls into the trap laid for him, Mr. Brass is correspondingly moral in his regret and indignation. "And this," he cries, clasping his hands, "is the world, that turns upon its own axis, and has lunar influences and revolutions round heavenly bodies, and various games of that sort! This is human natur, is it? Oh, natur, natur!" The hypocrisy is transparent to the reader; but still Mr. Brass himself is profoundly convinced that his mimicry of virtue is accurate to the letter. It is the fate of such low-minded liars and rogues as he, that they have not a sufficient perception of truth to ape successfully its ordinary signs and language.

If the most attractive of great men are those

whose sayings are on everybody's lips, then Mr. Richard Swiveller, poor, dilapidated, dissipated Dick, ranks with great men. At the time the "Old Curiosity Shop" was published, and for some years after, all his utterances supplied matter for universal quotation. Other great men have won distinction by the appropriateness of their sayings to the occasions which called them forth; Dick owes his fame to the delicious inappropriateness of his leading remarks. Dickens himself was delighted with the character. "Dick's behaviour in the matter of Miss Wackles," he wrote to Forster, "will, I hope, give you satisfaction. I cannot yet discover that his aunt has any belief in him, or is in the least degree likely to send him a remittance, so that he will probably continue to be the sport of destiny."

As he went on with the story, the character grew upon him more and more, and he especially gloried in the scenes of Dick with the Marchioness. It is not merely in such phrases as "the wing of friendship," "pass

the rosy," "a modest quencher," "blame not the bard," that the Perpetual Grand of the Glorious Apollos becomes quotable, but in the exquisite oddity and unexpectedness of many of the notions which suddenly assume shape in his helter-skelter brain. When Mr. Brass's lodger is roused from his repose of twenty-six hours, Dick tells him, that "the short and long of it is, we cannot allow single gentlemen to come into this establishment and sleep like double gentlemen without paying extra for it." "Indeed!" replied the lodger. "Yes, sir, indeed," returned Dick; "an equal quantity of slumber was never got out of one bed and bedstead, and if you 're going to sleep in that way you must pay for a double-bedded room." When he desires, after recovering from the first effects of his illness, to fly and save Kit, the Marchioness has to inform him that she has sold every article of his clothing to supply necessaries for his sick chamber. "It 's embarrassing," he remarks, "in case of fire — *even an umbrella would be something*." He

does not, on the whole, consider Sally Brass's description of him as "a funny chap" derogatory to his dignity; for, after a short pause, he discovers a regal precedent for mirth in Old King Cole, who "was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history."

His profound cogitations are always preceded by the folding of his arms, after the manner of actors in soliloquies; and it is thus he meditates after his first interview with the Marchioness: "She is a very extraordinary person — surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through the key-holes of doors — can these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

His naming of the miserable drudge of the Brass household, starved and beaten into precocious cunning and intelligence, "the Mar-

chioness," is a felicity that no other novelist but Dickens could have hit upon; yet the grotesqueness of the name is appropriate to the character of Richard Swiveller, a good-natured, good-for-nothing personage, who sees everything through the illusions of drink. The illusions are elating during the period that his modest quenchers stimulate his shallow brain into expression illogically quaint and unexpected; but depressing when the physical reaction of modest quenchers begins. In the latter mood, Dick philosophizes on his destiny; and as arrangement is the necessary condition of philosophic thinking, he adopts the numerical order, classifying his misfortunes under the head of Crushers or Staggerers, ranging from Crusher or Staggerer No. 1, to Crusher or Staggerer No. 6. Bearing the burden of such an accumulation of Crushers and Staggerers, ending in a malignant fever, it is no wonder that Dick is at last borne to the ground; but we all appreciate the wisdom of the aunt, who does not leave him the twenty-five thousand

pounds he expects, while we bless her memory for restricting him to an annuity of a hundred and fifty pounds, which enables him to put the Marchioness to school, and eventually to marry her. The name he devises for the Nameless One is Sophronia Sphynx, it "being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indicative of mystery." Dickens does not mention it, but was not Dick thinking of his dear and lost Sophy Wackles, now Cheggs, when he hit upon Sophronia?

The Marchioness is among the queerest of all children ever born of the romancer's brain. It would seem as if the serious conception of Little Nell had suggested to Dickens its humorous opposite; and in the shrewd and squalid minx, the offspring of the illegitimate loves of Quilp and Sally Brass, — the brat, who by being the object of her mother's hatred, is made cunning through suffering, — and who, by her untaught, instinctive talent for airing her eyes through key-holes, reveals and overturns the deeply contrived plots of

the knowing ones, her father and mother, — we discern another phase of early girlhood nearly as remarkable, considered as an imaginative creation, as that depicted in the saintly child, who leads and protects her grandfather through the perils of his second childhood. The alertness of intellect in the grotesque, sin-born minx and sphynx is happily contrasted with the calm, loving intelligence of Little Nell; and by some strange affinity, due perhaps to their common experience of injustice and wrong, they are indissolubly associated in the reader's imagination as complementing each other, — in short as counterparts.

Both in describing scenery and in representing character, Dickens seems to forget everything but what is before his mental eye. The closeness of his realization is due to his complete imaginative and emotional absorption in the objects and persons he discerns and watches. Ruskin says that all great art represents something the artist sees and believes in; and cites, in illustration, Dante's Centaur

Chiron, dividing his beard with his arrow before he speaks. This act, he adds, "is something that no mortal would ever have thought of, if he had not actually seen the Centaur do it." Other artists "might have composed handsomer bodies of men and horses in all possible ways through a whole life of pseudo-idealism, and yet never dreamed of any such thing. But the real, living Centaur actually trotted across Dante's brain, and he saw him do it."

Dicken's works are full of instances of the same kind of realism, though of course on a lower level of imagined facts. In "Oliver Twist," Oliver tells good Mrs. Bedwin that if his mother in heaven had seen him hurt it would have made her sorrowful, but that she could know nothing of him, because her face had always looked sweet and happy when he had dreamed of her. The old lady makes no reply to this, but she wipes her eyes, and then taking up her spectacles which lay on the counterpane of the bed, "wipes them also,

as if they were part and parcel of her features." We may say of this unconscious action, that Dickens saw her do it. When Sally Brass, in the "Old Curiosity Shop," is promised immunity for her own share in the conspiracy against Kit, if she will criminate her brother and Quilp, Dickens saw her take "two or three more pinches of snuff, and having by this time very little left, travelled round and round the box with her forefinger and thumb, scraping up another." Dickens, indeed, always adds some circumstance, serious or humorous, to indicate a vigilance of observation which is rare in men who observe facts before their eyes, and very rare in writers who aim to record facts before their minds. Thus any novelist would have seen that Squeers, when drunk, went to bed with his boots on; but it required the eye of Dickens to detect that he also had "his umbrella under his arm."

Connected with this intensity of observation, as regards persons, is his minuteness of detail in the representation of inanimate ob-

jects. In the "Old Curiosity Shop," this power begins to be forcibly displayed in connection with an imagination which endows these objects with life and personality. Nothing can be more accurate than the mere inventory of the worn-out articles of furniture in Brass's squalid office; but the genius of Dickens comes in, here and there, to give symbolic significance to some of the separate things described. The old chair by the fire is "treacherous," not merely because it is physically unsafe to sit upon, but because its "withered arms had hugged full many a client and helped to squeeze him dry." The carpet is trodden to shreds; but it becomes alive when it is further described as "still clinging with the tightness of desperation to its tacks." When Little Nell leads her grandfather from the close shop into the open street, the healthy air of the June morning is said to fall "like breath from angels on the sleeping town." The gladness of that morning in reviving all objects is curiously dwelt upon, until at last

comes the final touch: "The light, *creation's mind*, was everywhere, and all things owned its power."

The most famous example of all is the way in which the live water plays with the body of the dead Quilp. "It toyed and sported with its ghastly freight, now bruising it against the slimy piles, now hiding it in mud or long rank grass, now dragging it heavily over rough stones and gravel, now feigning to yield it to its own element, and in the same action luring it away, until tired of the ugly plaything, it flung it on a swamp — a dismal place where pirates had swung in chains through many a wintry night — and left it there to bleach."

But the special charm of the "Old Curiosity Shop" is the character of Little Nell. The conception dawned on Dickens's mind while he was on a visit to Landor, at his lodgings in Bath, and his first intention was merely to make out of it a short story of a few chapters. Landor, who had an extravagant admiration

for the character, told Forster some time after, that he "had never in his life regretted anything so much as his having failed to carry out an intention he had formed respecting it; for he meant to have purchased that house, 35 St. James's Square, and then and there to have burnt it to the ground, to the end that no meaner association should ever desecrate the birthplace of Nell." Landor was the original whose furies of speech suggested the character of Boythorn, in "Bleak House"; and he accordingly broke into a thundering peal of laughter after he had thus thunderingly stated his frustrated intention to commit arson.

In developing the nature of Little Nell, Dickens probably drew on a remembered personal sorrow. Mary Hogarth, a younger sister of his wife, and a girl of singular innocence, sweetness and beauty, died about the time he had completed the twelfth number of the "Pickwick Papers." He was deeply attached to her; his grief at her death was so overpowering that for a time he lost the power

of writing; and for two months the publication of that work was suspended.

Tennyson has a subtle thought in describing the effect of bereavement on the man of poetic imagination: —

> That imaginative woe
> That loved to handle spiritual strife,
> Diffused the shock throughout my life
> But in the present broke the blow.

In Dickens's case the shock of Mary Hogarth's death was not only diffused throughout his life, but the blow was terrible at the time it fell. In his epitaph on her she is thus briefly characterized: "Young, beautiful and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen." Every reader must have been impressed with the ideal remoteness of the character of Little Nell. She glides like a spirit through the motley scenes of the book. When writing about her, Dickens seems to enter some inner sanctuary of his mind; her presence lifts and solemnizes his mood and makes it religious; and in the beautiful

meditativeness of the closing chapters his sentences become rhythmical, as though they were attuned to some sweet, sad music, heard only by the hearing of the soul, — to a dirge befitting the passage of an angelic nature to its angelic home.

In all this we observe the action of imagination, brooding over a personal affliction sufficiently removed in time to admit of being consecrated to the heart it once lacerated. That Mary Hogarth was present to his mind we know from his letters. His first intention was to bring Nell to a happy end, in the romancer's sense of that term; but before the book was half finished he was induced by Forster to change his purpose. "I asked him," says Forster, "to consider whether it did not necessarily belong even to his own conception, after taking so mere a child through such a tragedy of sorrow, to lift her also out of the commonplace of ordinarily happy endings, so that the gentle pure little figure and form should never change to the fancy. All that

I meant he seized at once and never turned aside from it again."

But when the time came for describing her death, Dickens was so reluctant to undertake the task, that he represented himself to his friend as "the wretchedest of the wretched." [1] "It casts," he adds, "the most horrible shadow upon me, and it is as much as I can do to keep moving at all. I tremble to approach the place a great deal more than Kit; a great deal more than Mr. Garland; a great deal more than the Single Gentleman. I shan't recover it for a long time. Nobody will miss her like I shall. It is such a painful thing to me that I really cannot express my sorrow. Old wounds bleed afresh when I only think of the way of doing it: what the actual doing it will be, God knows. I can't preach to myself the schoolmaster's consolation though I try. *Dear*

[1] It was because his own personal feeling was so intense that he was able to communicate his passion to others. Macready notes in his diary:—

"Jan. 21, 1841. Asked Dickens to spare the life of Nell in his story, and observed that he was cruel.

Mary died yesterday, when I think of this sad story."

The moment, however, he morally and mentally secluded himself from everything else, and resolutely began the work, he passed into a comparatively tranquil region of sentiment and imagination. He realized the bitterness of death in all its intensity; but his nervous dread of it, his passionate revolt against it, disappeared in the perception that what is called death is but the solemn entrance into a new experience of life; that, as regards the

He blushed, and men who blush are said to be either proud or cruel; he is not proud, and therefore — or as Dickens added — the axiom is false.

"Jan. 22. Found at home notes from Ransom, and one from Dickens with an onward number of *Master Humphrey's Clock*. I saw one print in it of the dear dead child that gave a dead chill through my blood. I dread to read it, but I must get it over.

"I have read the two numbers; I never have read printed words that gave me so much pain. I could not weep for some time. Sensation, sufferings have returned to me that are terrible to awaken; it is real to me; I cannot criticise it."

Macready's own child had died less than two months before.

dear child of his brain and heart, the close of his serial story was not the close of her existence; and that "To Be Continued," instead of "Finis," was the appropriate phrase to be used by the chronicler of such a life. Dickens hoped that his account of the death of Little Nell would soften the idea of Death to thousands of bereaved fathers and mothers, to whom death is the supreme affliction of life; and probably no other author ever received so many private letters from sorrowing hearts, thanking him for a consolation which they had received from no hearing or reading of sermons, from no reading or singing of hymns.[1]

[1] An intimation of the correspondence in which Dickens became engaged on account of the sympathy he awakened is found in a letter of 28 September, 1841, which he wrote to Mr. L. Gaylord Clark, to the death of whose twin brother, Willis Gaylord Clark, he refers in the opening sentence: "I condole with you from my heart on the loss you have sustained, and I feel proud of your permitting me to sympathize with your affliction. It is a great satisfaction to me to have been addressed, under similar circumstances, by many of your countrymen since the

The wonderful influence of genius in meeting the needs of the human heart has rarely been more strikingly shown. The ideal remoteness of the character, as surveyed from the plane of actual experience, made it more efficient as a type of consecrated childhood and girlhood; and the countless faint reproductions of the type, in religious stories approved by orthodox divines, indicate with what certainty of insight the romancer had grasped one of the essential elements of Christian character. Most of the imitations of Little Nell are weak, and some of them are sentimental to the point of being maudlin. The original type has been so watered in the process of reproduction that we hardly recognize it in the thin dilutions of well-meaning medi-

Old Curiosity Shop came to a close. Some simple and honest hearts in the remote wilds of America have written me letters on the loss of children — so numbering my little book, or rather heroine, with their household gods; and so pouring out their trials and sources of comfort in them, before me as a friend, that I have been inexpressibly moved, and am whenever I think of them, I do assure you."

ocrity. Sydney Smith remarked of Macaulay, that he not only overflowed with learning but stood in the slops. In depicting his child heroine, Dickens may be said to have overflowed with beneficence, but his imitators, and not he, "stand in the slops." There is one eminent, one triumphant exception. The most extensively circulated of all romances is "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The Little Eva of that book is modelled on Little Nell, or at least suggested by her; and Little Eva did almost as much to give popularity to the most popular of romances, as Uncle Tom himself.

VI

BARNABY RUDGE

"BARNABY RUDGE" was published in the weekly numbers of "Master Humphrey's Clock." It followed immediately on the conclusion of the "Old Curiosity Shop." The publishers, Chapman & Hall, agreed to pay £3000 for it, on the understanding that they were to have the profits of the sale for six months after the publication of the last number. The copyright was then to revert to Dickens.[1] The work was published during the year 1841.

In writing this book, Dickens records, in his private letters, some of the strange freaks

[1] The bargain for the book carried with it an advance to Dickens which enabled him to close his connexion with Mr. Bentley and Bentley's *Miscellany*, for which *Barnaby Rudge* had originally been intended, and transfer his earlier books to Messrs. Chapman & Hall.

which his mind played with him when he most resolutely bent his energies to his task. On one day he writes to Forster: "I have been looking (three o'clock), with an appearance of extraordinary interest and study, at *one leaf* of the 'Curiosities of Literature' ever since half-past ten this morning — I have n't the heart to turn over." Again he despondingly confesses: "I did n't stir out yesterday, but sat and thought all day; not writing a line; not so much as the cross of a *t* or dot of an *i*. . . . Last night I was unutterably and impossible-to-form-an-idea-of-ably miserable."

Doubtless every man of creative genius has experienced at times these pauses of mental activity, when his mind appears dead within him, and he listlessly wonders if the lost inspiration will ever return. Dickens commonly took the hint of these visitations of sterility, and when his genius chose to take a vacation he sagely concluded to follow its example; but at times he was compelled, by the neces-

sity of providing something to meet the exactions of his weekly or monthly obligations, to strain his mind in an unequal race to overtake the deserting genius that was ever flying before him, and refusing to be fixed at his will. Hence, the inequalities observable in his writings; and these inequalities are particularly prominent in "Barnaby Rudge." In this romance he relaxes, at times, even the firm grasp he usually holds on characters he has once vitally conceived, and allows them to indulge in incongruities of expression which the least watchful reader can hardly fail to detect.

Dennis, the hangman, is a flagrant instance of carelessness in this respect. At first strongly conceived, he is continually on the verge of slipping from a character into a caricature, and now and then fairly topples over into that abyss. Dickens's moral wrath was fiercely roused in brooding over the fate of a certain Mary Jones, who was an extreme illustration of the absurdity and cruelty of English crim-

inal law, as administered in 1780; and forgetting for the moment the character of Dennis, he puts into the hangman's mouth the strongest didactive statement that could be made of the horrible injustice of her condemnation to death. Dennis, to be sure, closes with the exclamation, "Ha, ha! — Well! That being the law and the practice of England, is the glory of England, a'n't it, Muster Gashford?" — but then Dennis would have told the story in a very different way, if Dickens's sensibility had not got the mastery of his dramatic imagination. In this instance the relative positions of the characterizer and the characterized were reversed. Instead of Dickens, for the moment, becoming Dennis, Dennis, for the moment, became Dickens.

The most impressive incidents in the novel are those which are connected with the riots in London, resulting from the crazy Lord George Gordon's crazy appeal, in 1780, to all Protestants to rise in defense of their religion.

Under the cry of "No Popery" he succeeded in stimulating into mischievous activity the energies of those classes who are instinctively hostile to the restraints of all religion as well as of all law. London was for some days under the dominion of a brutal mob, such as has obtained power in few civilized cities. The uprising was no revolutionary movement against despotic "Order," in which ignorance, vice, and rapine were let loose to plunder and destroy under the direction of certain enthusiasts, ravenous to realize some noble idea of freedom, but it was a saturnalia of the stupid and criminal classes, without any principle, good or bad, to guide them in their blind instinct to burn, rob, and kill. All their acts proved that folly was the inspiration of their ferocity.

It is, perhaps, to the credit of England, that its mobs never rise to the dignity of mobs in the great cities of the continent of Europe, where they are commonly insurrections against governments, and not merely popular tumults.

England, being a constitutional country, provides legal vents for the political passions of the people; its insurrections are made at the hustings; its revolutions are conducted and regulated by law; and great reforms are achieved by voting, which, in other European countries, are ordinarily only obtained by fighting. Civil war is thus of constant occurrence in England without producing any perceptible effect on the price of the three per cents. Accordingly its mobs, being deprived of any inspiring sentiment of honour, patriotism, or hatred of oppression, are singularly stupid and brutal. Such, at least, was the "No Popery" mob active in the riots of the year 1780; and it may be confidently said that the true descriptions of those riots are to be found in no accredited, in no dignified "History of England," but must be sought in the glowing pages of "Barnaby Rudge."

Dickens first made himself master of all the contemporary accounts of the excesses committed by the wretches let loose in London,

and then, realizing them to his imagination, he practically became a witness of what passed before the eye of his mind, and caught the passionate excitement of the scenes he vividly reproduced. Everything he thus saw assumed to him a startling and distressing reality. "I have just burnt into Newgate," he writes to his friend, "and am going in the next number to tear the prisoners out by the hair of their heads." A week later he writes: "I have let all the prisoners out of Newgate, burnt down Lord Mansfield's, and played the very devil. Another number will close the fires, and help us on towards the end. *I feel quite smoky while I am at work.* I want elbow-room terribly." The words italicized indicate the intensity of his mental realization of the fires kindled by the mob. These fires at last become so actual to him that they affect even his physical senses; he feels "quite smoky" as in imagination he plunges into the roaring mob, and reproduces the frenzy which urges them to pass the torch from hand to hand.

In the light of that terrible conflagration, which envelopes alike Newgate and private dwellings, the mansion of the Chief Justice of England and the tavern of old John Willet, Dickens contrives to bring his characters into direct and conscious relations with each other. All his prominent as well as all his subordinate personages are drawn together by the seeming fascination of that central flame. Hugh and Sir John Chester; John Willet and his son Joe; Mr. Haredale, and Rudge, the murderer; Edward Chester and Emma Haredale; Mr. Varden, Miggs, Sim Tappertit, Dennis, not to mention others, come into contact during the progress of the riots. By a physical event, realized by an imagination kindled by passion, Dickens manages to gather up and combine into a kind of artistic unity all the various threads of his narrative,— to associate characters apparently discordant, and combine incidents apparently unrelated. The total effect is very impressive.

The romance opens with a description of

John Willet's tavern, the Maypole,—a house of public entertainment which will not be closed as long as its ideal landlord, Dickens, lives in the memories of men, but which will continue to be thronged by a host of visitors from the realms of imagination, and remain a house for the entertainment of many generations yet unborn. Most realistic British novelists have exerted their genius in detailing the felicities of any English inn to a hungry traveller. Not one of them but has done his best to attract his readers by presenting to them certain savory particulars which address their feelings of hunger and thirst. Fielding and Smollett commonly emphasize dishes which attract the animal appetite alone. Their successors have reinforced appetite by the introduction of a spice supplied from the intellect and feelings, and have made eating and drinking more or less an artistic exercise. It was in this sense that Thackeray declared there was good eating in Scott's novels. It would require but a little extension of the remark, to say that there was

good smoking in the novels of Thackeray and good drinking in the novels of Dickens. Each novelist unconsciously idealizes the special physical taste which seems to him the particular thing which draws men together in genial communion. The reader is supposed to become tolerant and humane by eating with Scott, smoking with Thackeray, and drinking with Dickens. The distinctions are, of course, not exclusive, for there is "good" drinking in Scott, and "good" smoking in Dickens, and "good" eating in Thackeray.

The saintly Dr. Channing, who neither ate, drank, nor smoked, was considerably troubled with the conviviality of the novels of Dickens, while he gloried in their philanthropy. On one side of the romancer's nature he recognized an author who carried out his own ideas of the essential dignity, beauty, and grandeur of human nature, and exhibited them in the humblest forms of humanity; but why this enormous appetite for food, and why this passionate absorption of porter? Probably no

other American admirer of Dickens so intensely appreciated the humane element in his novels as Dr. Channing, or was more grievously shocked when any of the characters he sympathized with indulged in beer or brandy. He feared that the sacred cause of temperance would be endangered by the philanthropist who, in representing human life, gave any prominence to the perilous stimulants which, in the long run, are found to be the causes of pauperism and crime.

There is, however, no novelist who has delineated the bad effects of excessive drinking in such vivid colors as Dickens has done. The most thrilling of temperance stories might easily be detached from his many-sided representations of human life. He was early impressed with the horrors of intemperance, as may be seen by his melodramatic account of the "Drunkard's Death" in the "Sketches." All the way through his novels, the consequences of inebriety are portrayed with painful reality. He exhibits every variety of intem-

perance as it debases widely differing kinds of character, from the imbecility of will which "good port" produces in the father of Agnes, to the melancholy wreck of all human attributes which "bad rum" produces in the father of the Dolls' Dressmaker. But still the jovial element in Dickens's nature, ebullient and redundant like the other elements, made him look at fermented liquors from a point of view different from that occupied by the temperance reformer. Possessing one of those vigorous constitutions which wine cannot weaken, and glorying in the sense of his own force of will, he stands in romance as the champion of the "moderate drinkers."

Yet the least critical reader will perceive that his feeling regarding stimulants is ever sensuous and never sensual; that wine is to him a symbol of kindliness and beneficence; that punch, as he compounds the ingredients, smacks of philanthropy; and that his imagination and sentiments enter into the cup that he joyously passes round. Drinking for the

mere sake of drinking was always his horror; but drinking as an incident, an accompaniment, or a stimulant of good feeling and fellow feeling, never appeared to him as a vice, if it were kept within the bounds of sobriety. This opinion, indeed, was an opinion which he shared with the great body of the English people; and in delineating the habits of the people he probably made his characters more real by indicating the exact time, in an incident or a conversation, when Mr. Tony Weller called for a mug of beer, when Mr. Sam Weller called for a glass of brandy and water, and when the cronies of John Willet, such as Phil Parkes, Tom Cobb, and Solomon Daisy, varied the stolidity of their smoking with a mild request for some small glass of the liquids stored up in the bar or in the cellars of the Maypole Inn. It will be observed, however, that the real taste of beer or spirits is something very different from the taste which Dickens communicates to them by his idealizing imagination. The mere animal appetite

for these things disgusts him; he is tolerant only to their effect in kindling latent sensibility, intellect, and fancy. The glass which has not in it sentiment as well as stimulant, brain as well as brandy, is to him a thing accursed.

But this long digression has drawn us away from a consideration of the characters which animate the story of "Barnaby Rudge." John Willet may well boast of occupying a high rank in Dickens's peerage of stupidity. Dickens clearly perceived and intensely enjoyed all the forms of character in which dulness of brain is associated with self-conceit and self-assertion. No English novelist has more felicitously shown than he the identification of dogmatism of opinion with doggedness of will, or more perfectly exhibited the vital connection of stupidity with self-importance. John Willet is one, among many characters, in which this union of profound ignorance with profound self-satisfaction is triumphantly displayed. Nothing can be bet-

knows which deserves more applause, the robust cheerfulness with which he endures the constant persecutions of Mrs. Varden's tongue, or the high-hearted intrepidity with which he faces death when his house is attacked by the rioters. His daughter, Dolly Varden, ranks in literature as one of the most charming of the coquettes of humble life. When Miss Haredale shows intense distress at the situation of her lover, Dolly is quite surprised. "To make one's sweethearts miserable," she says, "is well enough and quite right, but to be made miserable one's self is a little too much." The love she excites in Sim Tappertit lends additional melodramatic gloom to the manners of that mock-heroic apprentice. Miggs, the malignant, is quite an astonishing piece of humorous characterization, and a new language is invented for her, — simple English being inadequate to express the peculiar combination of bad qualities that she possesses. Hugh is a vigorous specimen of animal nature, as brave as a lion and as destitute of

soul. Sir John Chester is an unsuccessful attempt to represent the fine gentleman of the past century as he is described by Lord Chesterfield and Horace Walpole. He is not a character, but a satire on imperturbable heartlessness of character.

As, in John Willet, Dickens has indicated his power of depicting stupidity which is on the verge of idiocy but still not idiotic, so in Barnaby he has drawn, with minute distinctness, a line of distinction between sanity and insanity. The whole representation is profoundly pathetic. The raven, which is Barnaby's inseparable companion, is almost raised into a character of the book. Dickens was an amateur naturalist as regards ravens, and had penetrated into their inmost natures.

The romance of "Barnaby Rudge," without ranking with Dickens's best or with his most popular compositions, and betraying here and there a less persistent hold on character than is usual with him, is still a fascinating story, full of his peculiar humour and pathos,

with striking scenes vividly presented, and an advance on his previous romances as respects his constantly growing power of imaginative description.

VII

AMERICAN NOTES FOR GENERAL CIRCULATION

DICKENS sailed, or rather steamed, for the United States, early in January, 1842. During the previous six months he had been one of the most radical of the English liberals, dreading a Tory reaction and contributing many a squib and song to the journals, for the purpose of aiding those writers who were bent on covering the reviving Tory party with ridicule, contempt, and obloquy. One of his versified invectives, called "The Fine Old English Gentleman, to be said or sung at all Conservative Dinners," is given by Forster; and it breathes a spirit of wrath and scorn against the Tory gentry and nobility, which would not misbecome a Chartist in his wildest rage at the pretentions put forward by the

Privileged Classes. Nothing in his criticism of the United States equals it in bitterness. Indeed, in indignantly surveying the political outlook in his own country, he talked to his friends "of carrying off himself, and his household gods, like Coriolanus, to a world elsewhere! Thank God," he exclaimed, "there is Van Diemen's Land. That 's my comfort. Now I wonder if I should make a good settler! I wonder if I went to a new colony with my head, hands, legs, and health, I should force myself to the top of the social milk-pot, and live upon the cream! What do you think? Upon my word I believe I should."

It cannot be said, therefore, that he set out on his American journey with any prejudice against republican institutions. The trouble with him was that he knew little or nothing of the science of government, of political economy, or of the underlying laws which, with all the protests of individuals from a thousand various points of view, still make human society possible. Nature, in lavishing

on him so many precious gifts, had seen fit to deny him either the philosophic spirit or the philosophic mind. No man's eyes were keener than his to detect the minutest details of any subject; but the brain above the eyes, the power of generalizing details, of connecting them in their right relations, was comparatively left out in his intellectual constitution. He was a humanitarian and a humorist; one of the best and most delightful of humanitarians and humorists; but he was, in no sense, a philosopher; and to write anything about the United States in the year 1842, which was worth the consideration of thinkers, demanded powers which he did not possess. This was not the worst of it. The powers which he did possess beyond any other person then living, found but very imperfect expression in the "American Notes."

As to his lack of philosophic grasp of the subject of the United States and its institutions, two persons may be quoted, M. de Tocqueville and Macaulay. When, in the

French chamber of deputies, Dickens's book on America was referred to, de Tocqueville, in reply, ridiculed the notion that any opinions of Dickens on the matter in debate should be quoted as in any respect authoritative. This was the somewhat contemptuous judgment passed by the philosophical author of "Democracy in America" on the author of "American Notes." Macaulay, before the work was published, wrote to Macvey Napier, the editor of the "Edinburgh Review," "I wish Dickens's book to be kept for me. I have never written a word on that subject, and I have a great deal in my head. Of course I shall be courteous to Dickens, whom I know, and whom I think both a man of genius and a good-hearted man, in spite of some faults of taste." When the volumes appeared, he gave up the idea of making them even the excuse for an article. "This morning," he writes to Napier (October 19, 1842), "I received Dickens's book. I have now read it. It is impossible for me to review it; nor do I think that you

would wish me to do so. I cannot praise it, and I will not cut it up. I cannot praise it, though it contains a few lively dialogues and descriptions; for it seems to be, on the whole, a failure. It is written like the worst parts of 'Humphrey's Clock.' What is meant to be easy and sprightly is vulgar and flippant, as in the first two pages. What is meant to be fine is a great deal too fine for me, as the description of the Fall of Niagara. A reader who wants an amusing account of the United States had better go to Mrs. Trollope, coarse and malignant as she is. A reader who wants information about American politics, manners, and literature, had better go even to so poor a creature as Buckingham. In short, I pronounce the book, in spite of some gleams of genius, at once frivolous and dull. Therefore I will not praise it. Neither will I attack it — first, because I have eaten salt with Dickens; secondly, because he is a good man, and a man of real talent; thirdly, because he hates slavery as heartily as I do; and fourthly, be-

cause I wish to see him enrolled in our blue-and-yellow corps, where he may do excellent service as a skirmisher and sharp-shooter."

Macaulay evidently hoped that Dickens's book would be good enough to afford him an opportunity of discussing the future of the United States, as far as it depended on the operation of the principle of universal suffrage. He had an almost comical horror of a government which relied for its support, not on property and the intelligence which the possession of property implies, but on a wild waste of voters the majority of whom had neither property nor intelligence. As long as there was an immense extent of unoccupied land in the country, he thought the inevitable agrarian catastrophe might be postponed; but as soon as the time came when population harshly pressed on subsistence, the voting majority would destroy civilization, or the voting minority of men of property and intelligence would destroy liberty.

Dickens, in his book, never seriously raised

the question, for generalization of such compass was not his forte. Macaulay's opinions on this point are therefore to be found, not in the "Edinburgh Review," but in his letters to Mr. Randall, the biographer of Jefferson. It is curious that all the conditions which he supposes would destroy our system, either by the annihilation of property or liberty, have repeatedly arisen when financial panics have thrown the artisans and laborers of our great cities out of employment. The voters, "told by the head," have generally gone on voting for their favorite candidates, even when ignorance and hunger combined might have been supposed inducements enough to urge them to seek relief by adopting schemes of spoliation; but their elected representatives have never dreamed of destroying property, except, occasionally, by stealing it under the forms of law. The most hateful demagogues of our big cities, lifted to power by the votes of the ignorant and the indigent, are so gorged with public plunder that they would be the last of all

developed into "the heterogeneous" — which he considers the law of progress. There the casting of a vote represents the opinion of a man, — a will and individuality being put into the ballot-box as well as a piece of paper on which the name of a candidate is printed. In such districts the politician is troubled and bothered; he has to go through a whole course of mental gymnastics, ducking here, leaping there, torturing his intellectual frame into all kinds of twists and turns; but in the metropolis, he has only to consult with a few leaders of opinion, that is, with persons who hold in their hands the votes of so-called independent citizens, and the work is done a month before the result is stated in the record of votes. There is no question that property and civilization are saved by this process; for the votes mean nothing as far as the voters are concerned; and not a single agrarian measure is advanced by the election of their candidate, whether he be a Republican or a Democrat. If any confiscation of property occurs under

this system, it is commonly a confiscation of the wages and comforts of the poor for the benefit of the rich.

The dulness of the "American Notes" — dull in the sense of being "Notes" by Dickens — was due to his determination not to refer to the individuals he met, and not to record any of those overwhelmingly enthusiastic receptions and dinners which were so freely given in his honor. The subject of international copyright, on which he made eloquent speeches, and, at the same time, made some interested enemies, was also comparatively omitted from his book. Now what he cast aside was the only important matter in his six months' journey in the United States. Macaulay's contemptuous criticism was, in the main, true. There are passages, here and there, — such as the nobly pathetic one describing the emigrants he observed on the steamer between Montreal and Quebec, — which are in his best vein; but generally the account of his adventures, by stage and steamboat, is but the disappointing

record of "a most scattering and unsure observance." His genius is not there. He wrote, towards the close of his journey, to Forster, from Niagara Falls, "Oh! the sublimated essence of comicality that I *could* distil, from the materials I have!" That distilled essence of comicality he reserved for "Martin Chuzzlewit"; it is rarely to be observed in the "American Notes."

Haydon, the painter, was told by Talfourd that he introduced Dickens to the insolent Lady Holland. "She hated the Americans," according to Talfourd's statement, "and did not want Dickens to go. She said, 'Why cannot you go down to Bristol, and see some of the third or fourth class people, and they'll do just as well?'" When Dickens decided to notice, in his book, none of the first and second class of Americans he met, but to confine himself to the third and fourth, and not to notice them except as they were his accidental companions in a not very extensive journey, it would seem as if a jaunt to Bristol *would* have done "just

as well"; and that crossing the Atlantic to meet such "vulgar creatures," as My Lady would have doubtless called them, was a wasteful expenditure of time and talents.

We have therefore to seek in other quarters any adequate record of Dickens's impressions of his American journey. Forster devotes two hundred pages of the biography of his friend to the private letters he received from him; and Mr. Fields, in his delightful "Yesterdays with Authors," prints the racy letters which Dickens sent to Professor C. C. Felton, of Harvard College, during his residence in the United States, and immediately after his return to England. "How can I tell you," he writes to Forster from Boston, on January 28, 1842, "what has happened since that first day (of my arrival)? How can I give you the faintest notion of my reception here; of the crowds that pour in and out the whole day; of the people that line the streets when I go out; of the cheering when I went to the theatre; of the copies of verses, letters of congratu-

lation, welcomes of all kinds, balls, dinners, assemblies without end? There is to be a public dinner to me here in Boston next Tuesday, and great dissatisfaction has been given to the many by the high price (three pounds sterling) of the tickets. There is to be a ball next Monday week at New York, and one hundred and fifty names appear on the list of the committee. There is to be a dinner in the same place, in the same week, to which I have had an invitation, with every known name in America appended to it. . . . I have had deputations from the Far West, who have come from more than two thousand miles' distance; from the lakes, the rivers, the backwoods, the log-houses, the cities, factories, villages, and towns. . . . 'It is no nonsense and no common feeling,' wrote Dr. Channing to me yesterday. 'It is all heart. There never was, and never will be, such a triumph.'"

Of the men he met, he speaks warmly of the professors at the Cambridge University, Longfellow, Felton, Jared Sparks, as "noble fel-

lows." "So," he adds, "is Kenyon's friend, Ticknor. Bancroft is a famous man; a straightforward, manly, earnest heart, and talks much of you, which is a comfort. . . . Sumner is of great service to me." As to the people, all was rose-color at first. "There is no man in this town, or in this State (*sic*) of New England, who has not a blazing fire and a meat dinner every day of his life. A flaming sword in the air would not attract so much attention as a beggar in the streets. . . . A man with seven heads would be no sight at all, compared with one who could n't read and write." Such extravagances as these last simply indicate the writer's elation of soul, as he felt himself the guest of a nation, with everybody eager to overwhelm him with hospitalities.

George Ticknor, a scholar, writer, and leader of society, not easily swept away by enthusiasm, wrote to John Kenyon: "A triumph has been prepared for him, in which the whole country will join. He will have a progress through the States unequalled since Lafay-

ette's." Daniel Webster is said to have declared that Dickens "had done more to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen that Great Britain had sent into parliament." Dr. Channing, the ascetic saint and sage, while disturbed somewhat by the jollity of Dickens's writings, still thought that his pictures had "a tendency to awaken sympathy with our race, and to change the unfeeling indifference which has prevailed towards the depressed multitude, into a sorrowful and indignant sensibility to their wrongs and woes."

In his progress from Boston to New York he was worried and fatigued with attentions. It was only by a hard fight with landlords that he was able to pay his bills, — the committees of the towns on his route insisting on defraying all his expenses. On the steamboat between New Haven and New York, he met again with Professor Felton, who was going on to the Dickens dinner and ball at New York. "Like most men of his class whom I

have seen," Dickens writes, "he is a most delightful fellow, unaffected, hearty, genial, jolly, — quite an Englishman of the best sort. We drank all the porter on board, ate all the cold pork and cheese, and were very merry indeed." It is curious to those of us who remember the late Professor Felton, not only as the most genial of men, but as a sturdy American patriot, a Greek scholar of the first rank, a President of Harvard College universally beloved by the students, to find that Dickens can only compliment him as "quite an Englishman of the best sort," whereas we are inclined to remember him as an American "of the best sort."

It was at New York that, in the midst of ovations, Dickens, irritated by newspaper comments on his speeches regarding copyright, seems to have begun to dislike his entertainers. His American friends advised him not to introduce the subject of copyright into his speeches. He appears to have attributed to cowardice what was intended by them as judicious advice. They doubtless thought the

cause he advocated would be hindered rather than advanced by his appearance before the public, not as a guest of the nation whom all men were eager to honor, but as an English citizen, urging a change in the domestic policy of the United States. There is nothing that more offends the population of any country than the interference of a foreigner with its laws and institutions. Dickens seemed to think that there was something noble in the courage with which he put at risk his universal popularity, in order to tell the Americans, face to face, that they were guilty of injustice to himself and to his brother English authors. It is positively funny to note the grandiloquent way in which he writes to Forster. It seems that his "audacious daring" had paralyzed his friends with wonder.

"The notion," he says, "that I, a man alone by himself in America, should venture to suggest to the Americans that there was one point in which they were neither just to their own countrymen nor to us, actually

struck the boldest dumb. Washington Irving, Prescott, Hoffman, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Washington Allston, every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them *dares* to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law. It is nothing that of all men living I am the greatest loser by it. It is nothing that I have a claim to speak and be heard. The wonder is that a breathing man can be found with temerity enough to suggest to the Americans the possibility of their having done wrong."

There is something almost idiotic in nonsense like this. Some of the writers quoted are known as offenders against public opinion in matters more nearly touching the national sensibilities than the question of international copyright; and that any American author, whether first rate or fifth rate, should have ever trembled at the idea of bluntly telling his countrymen that they were wrong as to the matter of international copyright, is a proposition so absurd that one wonders how a hu-

morist, in any possible obscuration of his faculties, could have had the "temerity" to advance it. The only objection to Dickens's championship of the principle was this: that, under the circumstances, it was not in good taste. Had he, from the moment he arrived in the country, assailed negro slavery, and bravely expressed the convictions on that subject he has stated in his book, he might have felicitated himself on his "audacious daring," and perhaps have really stricken "the boldest" of his admirers "dumb."

Dickens early adopted a contemptuous opinion of the politics and government of the United States. "I still reserve my opinion," he writes to Forster, "of the national character — just whispering that I tremble for a radical coming here, unless he is a radical on principle, by reason and reflection, and from the sense of right. I fear that if he were anything else, he would return home a Tory. . . . I say no more on that head for two months from this time, save that I do fear that

the heaviest blow ever dealt at liberty will be dealt by this country, in the failure of its example to the earth. The scenes that are passing in Congress now, all tending to the separation of the States, fill one with such a deep disgust that I dislike the very name of Washington (meaning the place, not the man), and am repelled by the mere thought of approaching it."

After the two months had expired, he writes again to Forster, praising certain qualities of the American people, but arriving at this conclusion: "I don't like the country. I would not live here, on any consideration. It goes against the grain with me. It would with you. I think it impossible, utterly impossible, for any Englishman to live here, and be happy." Individual Americans he, of course, liked. "Washington Irving," he writes, "is *a great* fellow. We have laughed most heartily together. He is just the man he ought to be. So is Dr. Channing, with whom I have had an interesting correspondence since I saw him

last in Boston. Halleck is a merry little man. Washington Allston the painter (who wrote 'Monaldi') is a fine specimen of a glorious old genius. Longfellow, whose volume of poems I have got for you, is a frank, accomplished man, as well as a fine writer."

Then again, writing from Washington, he says that "there are many remarkable men in the legislature, such as John Quincy Adams, Clay, Preston, Calhoun, and others: with whom I need scarcely add I have been placed in the friendliest relations. Adams is a fine old fellow — seventy-six years old, but with most surprising vigor, memory, readiness, and pluck. Clay is perfectly enchanting; an irresistible man. There are some noble specimens, too, out of the West. Splendid men to look at, hard to deceive, prompt to act, lions in energy, Crichtons in various accomplishments, Indians in quickness of eye and gesture, Americans in affectionate and generous impulse. It would be difficult to exaggerate the nobility of some of these glorious fellows." One won-

ders on reading this, that he should afterwards have taken the Honorable Elijah Pogram as the type of American statesmanship. "When Clay retires," he goes on to say, "Preston will become the leader of the Whig party. He so solemnly assures me that the international copyright shall and will be passed, that I almost begin to hope; and I shall be entitled to say, if it be, that I have brought it about."

Nothing can more completely show how Dickens's opinion of the country rose or fell according to the chances of its passing an international copyright bill, than the sentences we have quoted. Senator Preston, on whom he relied, was what is called a whole-souled gentleman, but still a chivalric champion of the slave-holders; and Calhoun, of whom he speaks with praise, was the great logician of liberticide, — a man of high personal character, but whose incomparable powers of reasoning were devoted to riveting forever the chain of the slave, by closely fitting together every link in that chain of deductive argu-

mentation which seemingly doomed him to perpetual servitude.

Another cause of his discontent with the United States was the infinite fatigue he underwent, owing to the rush of the people to see and welcome him. It is cruel to make one man shake hands with a nation of men. The ovations were pleasant enough at first, but when the charm of novelty wore off they became an insufferable bore. Could Dickens have delegated his popularity to fifty or a hundred subordinates, he and they together might have had an agreeable time; but one person is physically incapable of bearing such a burden of attentions, congratulations, and acclamations as were with generous pitilessness heaped upon him. Some men are ravenously hungry for notoriety; others are epicures in tasting the sweet titbits of general recognition, accepting this dainty, and rejecting that; but the young Englishman of thirty, named Charles Dickens, was hospitably forced into the condition of a sated glutton of popular

applause, detesting the taste of the *pâté-de-foi-gras*, and abhorring the aroma of the choicest *Lafitte* of flattery, because he had been surfeited with them. It is easy to conceive of the unhappiness of this genuine, good-natured, jovial creature, suffering from the persecution of a nation's courtesy and admiration.

After he had been hardly more than a month in the country, he disconsolately wrote to Forster, from New York: "I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see. If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. If I visit a public institution, with only one friend, the directors come down incontinently, waylay me in the yard, and address me in a long speech. I go to a party in the evening, and am so enclosed and hemmed about with people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted from want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything, to everybody. I go to church for

quiet, and there is a violent rush to the neighborhood of the pew I sit in, and the clergyman preaches *at* me. I take my seat in a railroad car, and the very conductor won't leave me alone. I get out at a station, and can't drink a glass of water, without having a hundred people looking down my throat when I open my mouth to swallow. Conceive what all this is! Then by every post, letters on letters arrive, all about nothing, and all demanding an immediate answer. This man is offended because I won't live in his house; and that man is thoroughly disgusted because I won't go out more than four times in one evening. I have no rest or peace, and am in a perpetual worry." Oh! the perils and horrors of celebrity! And then the very persons who wish to drown him in an ocean of claret and champagne, or suffocate him in a crowd of well-dressed people for not one of whom does he care a sixpence, are indifferent to the theory of copyright by which he naturally hopes to derive a revenue from the sale of his works in America!

It is not to be wondered at that he became, day after day, more and more antagonistic to his hosts, whether they were aristocratically urbane, or democratically ebullient; that he became spiteful, even wrathful; and that he ended in leaving the country in a sullen mood of discontent, and in writing about it in a way which did little credit even to his powers of observation, satire, and humor. Indeed we cannot point out in his book any passage so funny as a paragraph in one of his early letters to Forster, in which he expresses his determination to return to England in a sailing vessel. After enumerating some of the dangers of an ocean steamer, he says: "Add to all this that by day and night she is full of fire and people, that she has no boats, and that the struggling of that enormous machinery in a heavy sea seems as though it would rend her into fragments —and you have a pretty con-siderable damned good sort of a feeble notion that it don't fit nowhow; and that it ain't calculated to make you smart, overmuch; and that you don't feel special

in 1842, may be said to have injured him in purse and fame; the second, in 1867–68, increased his fame, and put £20,000 into his purse.

On the 18th of April, 1868, four days before his departure from the United States, during his second visit to the country, a great dinner was given to him at Delmonico's, in New York. At this he made the following speech, — printed here because it contains a kind of apology for what he had written on America and the Americans: —

Gentlemen, — I cannot do better than take my cue from your distinguished President, and refer, in my first remarks, to his remarks, in connection with the old natural associations between you and me. When I received an invitation from a private association of working members of the Press of New York, to dine with them to-day, I accepted that compliment in grateful remembrance of a calling

that was once my own, and in loyal sympathy towards a brotherhood which in spirit I have never quitted. To the wholesome training of severe newspaper work when I was a very young man I constantly refer my first successes — and my sons will hereafter testify of their father that he was always steadily proud of that ladder by which he rose. If it were otherwise I should have but a very poor opinion of their father, which perhaps — upon the whole — I have not. Thus, gentlemen, under any circumstances, this company would have been exceptionally interesting and gratifying to me; but whereas I supposed that, like the fairies' pavilion of the "Arabian Nights," it would be but a mere handful, and I find it drawn out like the same elastic pavilion, capable of comprehending a multitude, so much the more proud am I of the honor of being your guest. For you will readily believe that the more widely representative of the press in America my entertainers are, the more I must feel the good will and kindly

sentiments towards me of that last institution.

Gentlemen, so much of my voice has lately been heard in the land, and I have for upwards of four hard winter months so contended against what I have been sometimes quite admiringly assured was a genuine American catarrh — a possession which I have throughout highly appreciated, though I might have preferred to be naturalized by any other outward or visible means — I say, gentlemen, so much of my voice has lately been heard in the land that I might have been contented not to trouble you any further from my present standing-point, were it not a duty with which I henceforth charge myself, not only here but on every suitable occasion whatsoever and wheresoever, to express my high and grateful sense of my second reception in America, and to bear my honest testimony to the national generosity and magnanimity. Also, to declare how astounded I have been by the amazing changes that I have seen around me on every

side. Changes moral, changes physical; changes in the amount of land subdued and cultivated; changes in the rise of vast new cities; changes in the growth of older cities almost out of recognition; changes in the growth of the graces and amenities of life; changes in the press — without whose advancement no advancement can take place anywhere. Nor am I, believe me, so arrogant as to suppose that in five and twenty years there have been no changes in me, and that I had nothing to learn and no extreme impressions to correct when I was here first.

And, gentlemen, this brings me to a point on which I have, ever since I landed here last November, observed a strict silence, though sometimes tempted to break it; and in reference to it I will, with your good leave, take you into my confidence now. Even the press, being human, may be sometimes mistaken or misinformed — and I rather think that I have, in one or two rare instances, known its information to be not perfectly correct with reference to myself. Indeed, I have now and again

been more surprised by printed news that I have read of myself than by any printed news that I have ever read in my present state of existence. Thus it appears strange to me to be informed of the vigor and perseverance with which I have for some months been "collecting materials for and hammering away at a new book on America," seeing that all that time it has been perfectly well known to my publishers, on both sides of the Atlantic, that I positively declared that no consideration on earth should induce me to write one.

But what I have intended, what I have resolved upon, and this is the confidence I seek to place in you, is that on my return to England, in my own English journal, manfully, promptly, plainly in my own person to bear for the behalf of my countrymen, such testimony to the gigantic changes in this country as I have hinted at to-night. Also to record that wherever I have been, in the smallest places equally with the largest, I have been received with unsurpassable politeness, deli-

cacy, sweet temper, hospitality, consideration, and with unsurpassable respect for the privacy daily enforced upon me by the nature of my avocation here and the state of my health. This testimony, so long as I live, and so long as my descendants have any legal right in my books, I shall cause to be republished as an appendix to every copy of those two books of mine in which I have referred to America. And this I will do, and cause to be done, not in mere love and thankfulness, but because I regard it as an act of plain justice and honor.

Gentlemen, this transition from my own feelings towards, and interest in America, to those of the mass of my countrymen, seems to me but a natural one; whether or not it is so, I make it an express object. I was asked in this very city, about last Christmas time, whether an American was not at some disadvantage in England as a foreigner? The notion of an American being regarded as a foreigner at all — of his ever being thought of or spoken of in that character, was so un-

commonly incongruous and absurd to me that my gravity was for a moment quite overpowered. As soon as it was restored, I said that for years and years past I had hoped I had had as many American friends and received as many American visitors as almost any Englishman living, and that my unvaried experience, fortified by others, was that it was enough in England to be an American to be received with the most earnest respect and recognition anywhere. Thereupon, out of half a dozen people, suddenly spoke out but two. One, an American gentleman of cultivated taste for art, who, finding himself, on a certain Sunday, outside the wall of a certain historical English castle, famous for its pictures, was refused admission there according to the strict rules of the place on that day, but by merely representing that he was an American gentleman on his travels, he had not only the picture-gallery but the whole castle placed at his immediate disposal. There was a lady too, being in London, and having a great desire to

see the famous reading-room of the British Museum, was assured by the English family with which she stayed that it was unfortunately impossible, because the place was closed for a week, and she had only three days there. Upon that lady's going, as she assured me, alone to the gate — self-introduced as an American lady — the gate flew open as if by magic. I am unwillingly bound to add that she certainly was young and extremely pretty. Still the porter of that institution is of an obese habit, and to the best of my observation not very impressible.

Now, gentlemen, I refer to these trifles as collateral assurance to you that the Englishman who shall humbly strive, as I hope to do, to be in England as faithful to America as to England herself, has no previous conception to contend against. Points of difference there have been; points of difference there are; points of difference there probably always will be between the two great peoples; but broadcast in England is sown the sentiment that these

two peoples are essentially one — and that it rests with them to uphold the great Anglo-Saxon race to which your President has referred, and all its great achievements throughout the world. If I know anything of my countrymen, and they give me the credit of knowing something of them, the English heart is stirred by the fluttering of these Stars and Stripes, as it is stirred by no other flag that floats, except its own. If I know my countrymen, in any and every relation towards America, they begin, not as Sir Anthony Absolute recommended lovers to begin, with a little aversion, but with great liking and a profound respect, and whatever may be the sensitiveness of the moment, or the little official passion, or the little official policy, now or then, or here or there, take my word for it, that the first enduring great popular consideration in England is a generous construction of justice.

Finally, gentlemen, I say this, subject to your correction: I do believe that from the great majority of honest minds on both sides,

there cannot be absent the conviction that it would be better for this globe to be riven by an earthquake, fired by a comet, or overrun by an iceberg, and abandoned to the arctic fox and bear, than that it should present the spectacle of these two great nations, each of which has, in its own way and hour, striven so hard and so successfully for freedom, ever again being arrayed the one against the other. Gentlemen, I cannot thank your President enough, and you enough, for your kind response to my health, and my poor remarks. But believe me, I do thank you with the utmost fervor of which my soul is capable.

VIII

THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

DICKENS'S "American Notes for General Circulation" was published in October, 1842. In January, 1843, appeared the first number of the "Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit." The work was continued in monthly instalments until its completion in July, 1844. It was not successful in the sense in which "Pickwick," "Nickleby," and "The Old Curiosity Shop" had been successful. Instead of a monthly circulation of fifty thousand copies, which the author might naturally have anticipated, it at first obtained a circulation of only twenty thousand. The introduction of the American scenes, which sadly interfered with the unity of the story, added but two or three thousand more.

"The Christmas Carol," published while

the larger work was in progress, showed a profit to the author of little more than seven hundred pounds. Dickens accordingly found himself in vexatious pecuniary embarrassments. The irritation of these was increased by a disagreement with his publishers, Chapman & Hall. In September, 1841, John Forster had drawn up an agreement duly signed, between Dickens and this firm, to this effect: that "Master Humphrey's Clock" was to cease with the close of the romance of "Barnaby Rudge," "the respective ownerships continuing as provided; and the new work, in twenty numbers, similar to those of 'Pickwick' and 'Nickleby,' was not to begin until after an interval of twelve months, in November, 1842. During its publication he was to receive £200 monthly, to be accounted as part of the expenses; for all of which, and all risks incident, the publishers made themselves responsible, under conditions the same as in the 'Clock' agreement; except that, out of the profits of each number, they were to have only a fourth, three fourths

going to him; and this arrangement was to hold good until the termination of six months from the completed book, when, upon payment to him of a fourth of the value of all existing stock, they were to have half the future interest. During the twelve months' interval before the book began, he was to be paid £150 each month; but this was to be drawn from his three fourths of the profits, and in no way to interfere with the monthly payments of £200, while the publication was going on."

There was a provision added that if — in case of what was then considered an improbable event — the profits of the book should prove inadequate to the repayment of the £1800 advanced to Dickens in monthly instalments of £150 before the publication of the serial work was to begin, "the publishers were to have power to appropriate fifty pounds a month out of the £200 payable for authorship in the expenses of each number; but though this had been introduced with my con-

sent," adds Forster, "I also knew too much of the antecedent relations of the parties to regard it as other than a mere form to satisfy the attorneys in the case." After the publication of the sixth number of "Chuzzlewit," however, he tells us that he heard "with infinite pain that from Mr. Hall, the younger partner of the firm which had enriched itself by 'Pickwick' and 'Nickleby,' and a very kind well-disposed man, there had dropped an inconsiderate hint to the writer of those books that it might be desirable to put the clause in force. It had escaped him without thinking of all that it involved; certainly the senior partner, whatever amount of as thoughtless sanction he had at the moment given to it, always much regretted it, and made endeavors to exhibit his regret; but the mischief was done, and for the time was irreparable."

Every reader of Lockhart's life of Scott must remember the explosion of rage with which Scott received the proposal of Blackwood, the bookseller, to recast the "upwind-

ing" of the plot of "The Black Dwarf." The bookseller not only objected to the text as it stood, but, on the advice of some nameless literary person, "on whose taste *he* placed great reliance," suggested an outline of a better conclusion to the story, and offered to bear the expense of cancelling the printed sheets if his proposal was adopted. The blood of Scott literally boiled in his veins. "Dear James," he wrote to Ballantyne, "I have received Blackwood's impudent letter. G. d. his s.! Tell him and his coadjutor that I belong to the Black Hussars of Literature, who neither give nor receive criticism. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that ever was made." The unaccustomed profanity of Scott in this missive only shows how fierce was his momentary resentment of the suggestion, that the bookseller and the bookseller's "literary man" should presume to sit in judgment on any product of his genius.

The rage of Dickens, though the circumstances were not the same, was identical in

spirit with that of Scott. The hint of Mr. Hall that the firm might think it prudent to enforce a clause the necessity of which was never anticipated in the original agreement, wounded him to the quick. His consciousness of inward power far exceeding that by which he had achieved his previous triumphs, was touched in its most sensitive nerve. He knew that he was doing something better than he had formerly done; he was correspondingly irritated at the suggestion that his popularity was decreasing in the same ratio in which he felt that his genius was increasing; and naturally suspected that his publishers were busied with the apprehension that — to vary Macaulay's words regarding Godolphin, when that horse-racing statesman feared a counter revolution — they had bet too high on Dickens, and that it was high time for them "to hedge." Dickens's wrath at this insult to his personal pride, and to his pride as an author, mildly insinuated as it was, became ungovernable; for though personally the most genial and

jovial of men among his companions, though never presuming to condescend to anybody, and receiving everybody he met, whether lord or *littérateur*, on one level of equality, he had a morbidly quick sense of personal dignity, —a sense as swift to resent any slight to his position as a Man, as the haughtiest Somerset or Howard could be to resent any slight to his "Order." He was accordingly intensely offended by the "hint" of Mr. Hall, though he had driven with the firm a bargain as hard as any recorded in the annals of "the trade." "I am so irritated," wrote Dickens to Forster, "so rubbed in the tenderest part of my eyelids with bay-salt, by what I told you yesterday, that a wrong kind of fire is burning in my head, and I don't think I *can* write."

After proposing to make an arrangement with Bradbury & Evans as his future publishers, he declares that he is "bent upon paying Chapman & Hall *down*. And when," he adds, "I have done that, Mr. Hall shall have a piece of my mind." Guided by the cooler

judgment of Forster, Dickens did not come to an immediate rupture with Chapman & Hall; and the negotiations with Bradbury & Evans resulted for the time in a disagreement, which Dickens was not in a mood to compromise, for he would not yield to their suggestion as to the expediency of republishing, in a cheap form, the works which had already made him famous.

Indeed, both the publishers he desired to abandon and the publishers he desired to adopt were probably more or less impressed with the notion that Dickens's popularity, in the coarse judgment of one of his reviewers, had "gone up like a rocket" and was now "coming down like the stick." Their experience of numerous contemporary novelists had justified them in dreading the reaction which commonly follows excessive popularity. They knew that the public was quick to discover that many a romancer it had at first hailed as a great and fertile genius either possessed no genius at all, or had worked a vein so thin that its wealth

was exhausted in his first publication, and that all which remained was the mere slag and refuse of a mine never very rich in itself. Chapman & Hall may have had a vague fear that the author to whom they had advanced money, and to publish whose works they had submitted to exactions such as hardly any other author had wrung from a publisher's reluctant greed, might turn out to be a Cibber instead of a Fielding, an Ainsworth instead of a Scott.

Dickens looked confidently into his growing genius; his publishers looked gloomily into their recording ledger; and the result was that the junior member of the firm "hinted" a possibility that the public was falling away from Dickens, when Dickens felt that his genius was never more capable of dominating and enthralling it. Richard Bentley, discerning the possibilities of Dickens's genius from the moment that Sam Weller appeared in the "Pickwick Papers," induced him to enter into seemingly liberal contracts for new works, which

the author shortly afterwards was inclined to repudiate as giving a disproportionate share of the gains to the publisher; Chapman & Hall, after granting to the author such extremely liberal terms as to excite the admiring despair of the whole brotherhood of writers, made the fatal mistake of doubting the possibilities of his exceptional genius to pass on to ever widening recognition, and ever new triumphs.

"Martin Chuzzlewit," which never, in its serial form of publication, obtained a circulation of more than twenty-three thousand copies, afterwards ranked in respect to popularity next to "Pickwick" and "David Copperfield." Dickens knew what his publishers did not know, that since he had gone to the United States his experience of the world had been enlarged, that a season of comparative rest had quickened and deepened his genius, and that both his satirical and his dramatic power of depicting human character and human life had become brighter and stronger than ever. Indeed, he was himself sometimes amazed at

the growth of his intellect, indicated to him by unexpected fertility of imagination, reason, and resource in developing characters which he had at first superficially conceived. "As to the way," he wrote to Forster, "in which these characters have opened out, that is, to me, one of the most surprising processes of the mind in this sort of invention. Given what one knows, what one does not know springs up; and I am as absolutely certain of its being true as of the law of gravitation—if such a thing be possible, more so." Forster very truly adds that this confession "displays exactly what in all his important characters was the very process of creation with him."

But the publishers, having a heavy weight on their shoulders, disturbed by the fact of a limited circulation of a work on which they had staked much money, were half blind to the great possibilities for the future which an intellectual advance so unmistakable as that from "Barnaby Rudge" to "Martin Chuzzlewit" ought to have impressed on their

minds. This progress indicated that as long as the faculties of the humorist and novelist were vigorous, he would be under no necessity to repeat old characters or old incidents, but was capable, like Scott, of creating new characters and new incidents, with every new work that engaged the sympathies or antipathies of his ever active brain and ever broadening heart. However high they may have bet on Dickens, there was no real reason in the fear which induced them "to hedge"; for his genius was so evidently *growing*, that nothing but inaccurate judgment, based on timid policy, could have led them to suppose that it had finally *grown*. Indeed, this genius went on growing for years; and the great body of the reading public welcomed every additional evidence of growth with ever increasing delight and ever increasing recognition.

Those who doubted the permanence of Dickens's popularity were amazed by its sure and steady advance. The booksellers looked on the phenomenon with something of the feeling with

which a skeptical broker surveyed the rise of the New York Central Railroad in the stock market. As it rose to a premium of ten, to a premium of twenty, to a premium of fifty, to a premium of eighty, the cry constantly was that there must be a fall at each stage of the upward movement. Millions of dollars were lost in speculating on the probabilities that a stock which so rapidly rose in value must have some equally rapid period of depression; all the experiences and all the precedents of Wall Street sustained the theory; and yet every broker who ventured to act upon it was ruined. So the reputation of Dickens, considered as a marketable commodity, confounded all the calculations of the publishers. As a fancy stock it might be safe at fifty premium; at eighty premium it was a risk that still had in it a promise of profit; but when it continued to rise, and never ceased to rise until the death of the writer, the booksellers fairly recognized the distinction between an exceptional genius, such as rarely appears on the planet, and a

genius which, limited within narrow bounds, soon exhausts its resources and its power to attract.

The publishers who purchased Dickens at his own high valuation made more money than the publishers of many good authors who were content with a comparatively modest remuneration, just as those capitalists who invested in New York Central at its highest price found themselves better off, in respect to dividends, than those who invested in Erie, or Wabash, or Milwaukee, or Northwestern, at fifty or eighty per cent below par. The parallel might be extended to many other departments of business. It is sufficient to indicate that a popular author, continually growing in genius, is like a railroad, or any other company, continually growing in resources and business. It is not so much what is paid, as the *percentage* of return on what is paid, which concerns either the publisher or the broker; and the sagacity displayed in either case is the test by which we decide on the business

capacity of the publisher who appreciates the intrinsic value of a man of genius whose powers are continually expanding, and the wisdom of the broker who intimately knows the value of a railroad whose trade is steadily remunerative and whose lucrative "connections" are constantly extending.

It is therefore plain that Chapman & Hall should not, as men of business, have dropped that "hint" which alienated from them the most popular novelist of the age. If they had considerately overlooked a transient pause in his immense popularity, and wisely humored a transient irritation of his offended pride, they would be thousands of pounds richer than they are now.

The moral of the whole matter is this, that when a publisher has discovered a "Big Bonanza," a real "Virginia Consolidated" mine, he should not be frightened by occasional irregularities in the amount of the annual receipts. He should have sense enough to fasten his attention on the exceptional rich-

ness of the vein. It is only two or three times in a century that a genius like that of Dickens is discovered, or that it is at first appreciated by those who wish to profit by its fertility.

The result of all Dickens's vexations and disappointments was a determination on his part to reside abroad. He believed that he could economize in France or Italy, and enjoy there most of the advantages of England at one half the expense. He not only had to support an increasing family on a diminished income, but in England he was a son, a brother, a cousin, as well as a husband and father. "Beyond his own domestic expenses," says Forster, "there were many never satisfied claims from family quarters, not the more easily avoidable because they were unreasonable and unjust." It is easy to understand that when a man of genius, springing up from an impecunious stock, becomes a world-wide celebrity, and is supposed to enjoy an income of fabulous amount, every person connected with him by the tie of relationship should present

claims to a purse which, like that of Fortunatus, is supposed to be bubbling over with inexhaustible guineas.

After many partings, celebrated by jovial dinners, with friends who fairly represented the literature and art of Great Britain, he contrived, in July, 1844, to escape from them, from his relations, from his publishers, and from the English public, by transferring his domestic establishment to Italy. Indeed, he felt that he was too poor a man to live in England in what he styled "a genteel way." He thought that, by expatriating himself for a short period, he would widen his sphere of observation, enrich his genius, and at the same time avoid unreasonable claims on his diminished resources. The event proved that his determination, though warmly opposed by his best friends, and seemingly prompted by caprice and irritated self-esteem, was eminently judicious.

In all his relations with the public Dickens never made a mistake, either when he appealed

to it in his ordinary way as a romancer, or in his extraordinary way as a reader of his romances. He had a wonderful tact in discerning the feeling of large masses of men, in accommodating himself to all the changes of that feeling, and in being ever ready to direct it to his own purposes. All the books he published after "Martin Chuzzlewit" he regarded not only as literary, but as social and political events. The immense circulation of his books, the immense recognition of him as a Force directing the opinions of the public as well as contributing to its amusement, and the introduction into each succeeding romance of a deliberate attack on the abuses of some department or institution of the government of his country, made him consider the publication of one of his serial stories an important incident in the progress of social, legal, or political reform, which the praise or blame of critics could not seriously affect.

Self-absorbed in his sense of the primary claim of his own writings to public attention,

he became autocratic in his relations to the non-Dickens portion of the literature of his time. He insensibly gathered round himself a clique of sympathetic admirers, emancipated himself from the control of independent minds, and, strong in the feeling of his own genius, contemptuously disregarded all those who censured his faults, and hardly vouchsafed more than a protecting nod to those who rapturously extolled his shining merits. The public, instinctively recognizing him as an original genius, pampered every caprice into which he wandered, submitted to every pretension in which he indulged, tolerated even every assault he made on its cherished prejudices, because he had the power to make it laugh or cry at his sovereign will. Strong in the impregnable position he had thus established in the public mind and heart, he could afford to be indifferent either to censure or panegyric.

The purpose that Dickens had in view in writing "Martin Chuzzlewit" was to exhibit the master passion of selfishness in the wide

variety of character in which it finds expression. The more subtle as well as the more obvious aspects of this passion he intended to represent in persons who agreed in being selfish, however widely they might differ as respects birth, manners, fortune, country, taste, cultivation, intellect, and conscience. Selfishness is the central idea of the story; and Pecksniff was originally designed as the central character, around whom mere selfish brutality like that of Jonas Chuzzlewit, and the more refined, the more remote, selfishness of self-will as embodied in the elder and younger Martin Chuzzlewit, might revolve, with any number of satellites, large and small, in their train.

Considered, however, as an artistic work, the romance is very imperfectly constructed. When he first put pen to paper, the author knew his general design; but the development of the plot, the nature of the incidents, were determined by chance or caprice as he went on with his work.

It may here be said that after "Chuzzle-

wit" he wrote no novel without first forming in his own mind an intelligent beginning, middle, and end; but in this, one of his most delightful creations, he wandered on without knowing in advance where he was to come out, and was indeed embarrassed with a crowd of characters whose ultimate destiny was as unseen by him as it was by his readers. His American scenes, which lend so much raciness to the book, were not contemplated when he began it; and he was far into the story before he had obtained a clear idea of its appropriate conclusion. But, as in the "Pickwick Papers," the wide range of incident and character over which he roamed at will gave a peculiar vivacity, spontaneity, and frolicsomeness to his genius, — a genius which was perhaps never so mirth-provoking as when it overleaped the bounds which his cultivated sense of artistic decorum afterwards, as Mrs. Gamp would say, "impoged."

We must therefore look at "Martin Chuzzlewit" in the spirit in which it was written.

A sore point with Americans is its caricature of the people of the United States. In Dickens's last triumphal march through the country, as an interpretative reader of his own works, he made, in a few months, £20,000 in gold, — a sum larger than Abraham Lincoln received during his four years' service as President of the Republic, when the very existence of the Republic was in question, enveloped as it was in a continuous storm of fire and blood. In a farewell banquet given to him in New York, he admitted that his "American Notes" were more or less unjust to the American people; but neither he nor his audience seemed to remember that the offence he had committed, if offence it might be called, was not recorded in "American Notes for General Circulation," but in the pages of "Martin Chuzzlewit." General Choke's remark in that novel, "We air a reading people, sir," seemed to be on a sudden forgotten by the "reading people" who assembled to do just honor to the departing novelist.

In "Martin Chuzzlewit" Dickens appears personally as an enemy to our whole republican system as embodied in the men and women then living in the country. He breaks out, after a deliciously humorous account of the Watertoast Association of United Sympathizers with Daniel O'Connell, in a diatribe worthy of "the young Columbian" or of Elijah Pogram himself. "Who thinks," he says in reference to ordinary American patriots, "that crying out to other nations, old in their iniquity, 'We are no worse than you!' (No worse!) is high defence and 'vantage ground enough for that Republic, but yesterday let loose upon her noble course, and but to-day so maimed and lame, so full of sores and ulcers, foul to the eye and almost hopeless to the sense, that her best friends turn from the loathsome creature in disgust." Again, when leaving the United States, Mark Tapley suggests to young Martin that if he were a painter, and were called upon to paint the American eagle, he should "draw it like a Bat,

for its short-sightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like an Ostrich, for putting its head in the mud and thinking nobody sees it." To this description Martin can only add the hope that it might also be drawn like "a Phœnix, for its power of springing from the ashes of its faults and vices and soaring up anew into the sky!"

Whatever may be said against the United States, there is a general prejudice, supported by the fact that the emigrants of many nations have found it for their interest to act upon it, that the country possesses millions on millions of acres of cheap, rich, and wholesome land, by cultivating which a European peasant easily becomes a member of what Disraeli happily styled "a territorial democracy"; but in reading "Chuzzlewit," an English farmer would suppose that the unoccupied land of the United States was like the swamps in "Eden," where young Martin and Mark Tapley reaped no other harvest for their labor than

malarious fever.[1] The animus of the book, whether the author humorously caricatures or savagely declaims, is a feeling of hostility to the United States, which has all the characteristics of a personal animosity.

To ascertain the cause of this animosity we need not go far to seek. Dickens's "American Notes" had drawn down upon him a storm of indignation from several prominent American newspapers. In these his character was assailed, and his motives in crossing the Atlantic belied. It seemed as if the hospitality with which he had at first been welcomed to the country was more than counterbalanced by the scurrility which followed his departure from it. Dickens, as his private correspondence shows, was excessively irritated. Probably every contrivance was used to insure the deliverance to him of every number of every

[1] Mr. Forster seems to think that Dickens found his Eden when travelling by canal from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, but his own description of Cairo in *American Notes*, chapter xii, is much more suggestive.

journal which denounced him as an ingrate, who had rewarded a spontaneous enthusiasm, such as no author since Petrarch had drawn forth from the hearts of a people honestly desirous of doing him honor, by a series of libels worse than those of Cobbett or Trollope, whose rage against the country might properly be referred to the contemptuous neglect with which both had been treated by the best citizens of the Republic.

No reader of "Martin Chuzzlewit" can fail to remember the terrific announcement of General Choke, as to the effect which the proceedings of the Watertoast Association of United Sympathizers with Daniel O'Connell would produce on Queen Victoria. "There ain't," declares the General, "a en-gine with its biler bust, in God A'mighty's free U-nited States, so fixed, and nipped, and frizzled to a most e-tarnal smash, as that young critter, in her luxurious lo-cation in the Tower of London, will be when she reads the next double-extra 'Watertoast Gazette.'"

Martin laughingly suggests that the number of the Gazette thus fraught with disastrous consequence may never reach its august object. General Choke smiled on him, and on his hearers, as he benignantly retorted: "It is sent to her, sir. It is sent to her. Per mail."

Now there can be no doubt that the few sober criticisms on Dickens by our scholars, and the hundreds of shrieking editorials launched against him by our Jefferson Bricks, were duly sent to him — "Per mail." The result was what might have been expected. Dickens was enraged; but he saw that the peculiar powers in which he excelled all living men were more than a match for the facts, the arguments, and the declamations of his opponents. At the present day, we have forgotten the solid as well as the screaming newspaper articles which stung him into retaliation, while we still heartily laugh over the monstrous caricatures of American life and character in which his humorous rage found expression.

The contest only illustrates one of a hun-

dred instances, in which a man, whose wrath finds a vent in humor, is manifestly more effective in addressing the public mind than a man whose wrath comes out in direct appeals to passion and prejudice.

Dickens impersonated his newspaper opponents in Colonel Diver and Mr. Jefferson Brick of "The Rowdy Journal," with an oblique reference to meaner adversaries in "The New York Sewer." The names themselves were efficient; and the way in which the humorist impersonated his sarcasms by making them alive, and represented them as walking the streets of New York in company with respectable citizens, clearly demonstrated how feeble are impassioned declamations against delicious drolleries.

With a kind of gleeful malice, Dickens put language into the mouths and pens of his enemies which only humorously exaggerated the language in which he was himself denounced; and he performed this trick in so effective a fashion that Americans joined with English-

men in laughing at the American editors who were so savagely earnest in vindicating the cause of their country against its humorous assailant. There is, indeed, no ferocity of invective, though it combine the point and venom of Junius with the passion and imagery of Burke, that can withstand a humorist, who retorts by individualizing his opponents in picturesque forms of ludicrous character, in which all their declamations and arguments are, by racy exaggeration, turned against themselves, and they are made ridiculous by the simple process of heightening every extravagance of their rhetoric, and by caricaturing every peculiarity of their method of argumentation. In this way he answers his antagonists by adopting their general mode of attack on himself, — makes the attack ridiculous by adding to its fierceness, — and, penetrating into the camp of the enemy, stimulates an insubordination which is expressed in roars of laughter, and rouses a mutiny which finds the most dangerous of all outlets, that of sneers and jeers of

contempt. As long as declamations and arguments are answered by corresponding declamations and arguments, the controversial battle goes on according to the established rules, with a good hope that the most brilliant rhetoricians and the ablest logicians will win; — but when the power of humorous characterization comes into the controversy, then Artemus Ward is an adequate offset to Calhoun, and Mark Twain more than a match for Webster. A joke is of small effect in itself; all orators and statesmen occasionally condescend to a jesting mood; but a joke happily embodied in character, a joke which caricatures a weak point in the personality of a statesman, a joke which felicitously hits some defect in his nature which multitudes instantly recognize when it is vividly presented to them by a great humorist, is more than a joke, because the moment it is appreciated it becomes a power.

It would be useless to deny that Dickens had some foundation of truth on which to base his droll characterizations, not only of Mr.

Jefferson Brick and Colonel Diver, but of Zephaniah Scadder and Hannibal Chollop, of La Fayette Kettle and General Choke, of Elijah Pogram and Captain Kedgick, of Mrs. Hominy and Miss Codger; but still the question remains, why he should have deliberately selected for representation only the rascality and folly of the country, of which he could have had but a slight knowledge, and have passed over the men of sense and honesty whom he daily met. Few tourists from England ever had a fairer opportunity to become acquainted with honorable American gentlemen, whether merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, jurists, statesmen, scholars, soldiers, or men of letters. He availed himself of this privilege; but when he came to reproduce his experiences as a romancer, he turned aside from all the respectable men with whom he had associated, in order to fasten his attention on whatever was most hateful, depraved, despicable, and it may be added, laughable, in the nation which had received him as an honored guest.

One reason for this strange oversight has been already stated. He was irritated at the scurrility lavished on him on account of his "American Notes"; but another reason still remains to be stated. He found himself in a country where all people who could read seemed to be more familiar with his creations than were his own countrymen. Millions of copies of his books were distributed through the whole length and breadth of the land. He was surfeited with praises of his genius; and naturally asked why he, practically a poor man, should not have in this country a copyright, however small, on the products of his genius? Most of his entertainers, though warm in their admiration of his creations, gave him but slight hope that the creator thereof would ever be protected here in the property of his works.

He wrote to Forster in May, 1842, from Niagara Falls, that there were two obstacles to international copyright. The first was the delight of an American in getting the better of

a man in a bargain, — of "doing" him in a matter of business. The second was the universal national vanity. In regard to the first, he oddly believed that an essential part of the pleasure which an American derived from the reading of a popular English book, was the fact that the author got nothing by it. "It is so dar-nation 'cute — so knowing in Jonathan to get his reading on those terms. He has the Englishman so regularly on the hip that his eye twinkles with slyness, cunning, and delight; and he chuckles over the humor of the page with an appreciation of it quite inconsistent with, and apart from, its honest purchase. The raven has n't more joy in eating a stolen piece of meat, than the American has in reading the English book he gets for nothing."

As to the second class, the elevated class of Americans, he tells his friend that they are glad to see a popular English author, who has won the admiration of an American public; "they flock about him, and tell him that they

are grateful to him for spirits in sickness; for many hours of delight in health; for a hundred fanciful associations which are constantly interchanged between themselves and their wives and children at home!" And then, he goes on to say, these free and enlightened Americans having read him, and enjoyed him, think that the glory of their appreciation should suffice for the author. What can he desire more?

This is, of course, a mere caricature of the opinions of Jonathan, whether cultivated or uncultivated; but it explains Dickens's indifference both to the hospitality and the panegyrics of his American admirers. "If you really like me, why don't you pay me? Those roars of laughter, those bursts of emotion, are so many evidences that you have swindled me out of my just rights. Am I to go on forever, amusing you in your hours of languor, and comforting you in your hours of affliction, without any reward for my exertions? You are thieves—hypocritical thieves; for you praise

me to the skies whilst at the same time you are busy in picking my pockets!" This, we are inclined to think, was Dickens's secret feeling in the midst of ovations which might have satisfied the vanity of a prince of the blood royal.

But nothing that Dickens could say or write against the country seriously diminished his popularity with the great body of the American reading public. Some admirers might wince a little in finding such rascals as Choke, Scadder, and Chollop, and such fools as Jefferson Brick and Elijah Pogram, put forward as representative citizens of the Republic; but their delight in Mark Tapley, Pecksniff, Mrs. Gamp, Mr. Mould, Mrs. Todgers, and Bailey Junior, was so great as to condone the offence to their national pride. Indeed, the general good humor with which Dickens's book was received by Americans was funnily illustrated in December, 1844, six months after the conclusion of "Chuzzlewit," when the author accidentally detained for an hour a packet in

which he was to sail from Marseilles to Genoa. "As he went up the side," says Forster, "he saw a strange sensation among the angry travellers he had detained so long; heard a voice exclaim, 'I 'm blarmed if it ain't Dickens!' and stood in a group of *five Americans!* But the pleasantest part of the story is that they were, one and all, glad to see him; that their chief man, or leader, who had met him in New York, at once introduced them all round with the remark, 'Personally, our countrymen and you can fix it friendly, sir, I do expectuate'; and that, through the stormy passage to Genoa which followed they were excellent friends."

Dickens's account of what followed reminds the reader of a narrative by Mark Twain. The member of the American company who had the travelling dictionary would not part with it, though he was sick in a berth next to that of Dickens. The latter heard, now and then, the American travellers coming down to their leader with the questions: "I say, what 's French

for a pillow?" "Is there any Italian phrase for a lump of sugar? Just look, will you?" "What in the devil does echo mean? The garsong says echo to everything." They were "excessively curious to know, too, the population of every little town on the Cornice, and all its statistics, perhaps the very last subjects within the capacity of the human intellect that would ever present themselves to an Italian steward's mind. He was a very willing fellow, our steward; and having some vague idea that they would like a large number, said at hazard fifty thousand, ninety thousand, four hundred thousand, when they asked about the population of a place not larger than Lincoln's Inn Fields. And when they said *Non possible!* (which was the leader's invariable reply), he doubled or trebled the amount, to meet what he supposed their views, and make it quite satisfactory."

The English scenes, incidents, and characters of "Martin Chuzzlewit" are generally in Dickens's best manner. The writer of this Pre-

face, in a lecture delivered over thirty years ago, remarked in allusion to the satire of the novel, that "as Americans we have a decided advantage over our transatlantic friends, even in the matter of being caricatured by the novelist whom both are rivals in admiring; for certainly if there be any character in which Dickens has seized on a national trait, that character is Pecksniff, and that national trait is English." Forster, in speaking of "the astonishing fun and comicality" of the American scenes, adds that the Americans "had no Pecksniff at any rate. Bred in a more poisonous swamp than their Eden, of greater, older standing, and much harder to be drained, Pecksniff was all our own. The confession is not encouraging to national pride, but this character is so far English, that though our countrymen are as a rule by no means Pecksniffs, the ruling weakness is to countenance and encourage the race. When people call the character exaggerated, and protest that the lines are too broad to deceive any one, they

only refuse, naturally enough, to sanction in a book what half their lives is passed in tolerating if not in worshipping." Forster indeed had some difficulty in dissuading Dickens from printing this motto on the title-page of the book: "Your homes the scene, yourselves the actors, here!" and he praises the daring as well as the vigor and discernment of Dickens in taking for the central figure of a tale of existing life, such "a sleek, smiling, crawling abomination" as Pecksniff. Indeed the vivid presentation of such a hateful type of character, abounding in all societies, and poisoning all societies in which it abounds, should be ranked among moral and patriotic deeds. As "Pickwickian" has become a synonym of jovial beneficence, so "Pecksniffian" has become the fatal word by which all members of the English race stigmatize and blast that most odious of all forms of hypocrisy, the unctuous mimicry of the externals of morality and benevolence.

The character, though too transparent as

represented by Dickens to deceive the reader, really does deceive thousands of honest people in actual life. Any person who has met Pecksniff, and has not been swindled by him many times, must be a person whose experience has been extremely limited. In the fictitious representation of him we frequently feel like exclaiming with the shrewd and cunning old miser, Anthony Chuzzlewit, — "Don't be a hypocrite, Pecksniff"; but as the original, detestable creature meets us in the street, in banks and counting-houses, in churches and meetings of philanthropists, we know that he has an oily constitution of mind and body which enables him to slip into places of trust, honor, and profit as a preëminently "respectable" man, — a man soft in manner, incapable of anger, loftily moral though with a lamb's gentleness, embodying in himself all that hypocrisy can mimic of the austere integrity of the old Puritan and the expansive benevolence of the modern philanthropist, and indeed a perfect Judas in everything but this, — that, after

receiving his thirty pieces of silver, he has not the grace to go out and hang himself, but invests the thirty pieces in a good dividend-paying stock, and then, serenely smiling on the gulls who hasten to do him reverence, talks to them beautifully of the obligations of the moral law, and of the sure rewards which wait on a life mainly devoted to following out the precepts laid down in the gospels.

It is excessively difficult to punish this kind of sinner; his bland temperament teaches him to suppress all the signs of resentment which a man with a bit of blood, or heart, or soul in him instinctively reveals when his roguery has been suspected or exposed; and to all obloquy he opposes that apparently just reliance on the testimony of a pure conscience, a testimony known only to himself, which he confindently expects will silence all the noise of eloquent defamation. His position seems impregnable, undermined though it be by barrels of gunpowder, which have been collected by the industry of attorneys and orators; for

there seems to be no method by which the train can be lighted. Suddenly a simple honest man in the expectant crowd suggests the name of Pecksniff, and then the explosion is so terrific as not only to blow that excellent gentleman into the air, but to endanger the lives and limbs of many of the bystanders. When everything else fails to expose and convict a politic and plausible rogue, the mere act of connecting his name with that of Pecksniff insures his downfall; for the mass of voters are well acquainted with the vices of that personage; they hate him and them so cordially that they would rather submit to be governed by Mr. Jefferson Brick, or Mr. Hannibal Chollop, or the Honorable Elijah Pogram, than by that negation of all manliness to which, with a kind of ferocious derision, they attach the epithet "Pecksniffian."

Mr. Pecksniff, up to a certain period in the progress of the story, has the usual good fortune of the hypocrite in possessing a dupe who is the advertiser of his virtues to the world.

This dupe is Tom Pinch. It is probable that a man like Dickens, rejoicing in his faculty of penetrating, with a glance, through all the outside pretensions of a rogue into those interior recesses of character where the rogue considers himself securely hidden from all eyes but his own, had a peculiar liking, compounded of tenderness, pity, and respect, for the person who takes things on trust, and who believes that others are as guileless and as truthful as himself. Accordingly in this tragicomedy, devoted to the exhibition of selfishness, Dickens has lavished on Tom Pinch, Mr. Pecksniff's drudge and trumpeter, all the resources of his benevolence and humor, and has triumphantly shown how much more worthy he is of love and esteem than any of the other characters in the book. He praises Tom, delights in Tom, glorifies Tom; but still there is an air of condescension, a tone of commiseration, in his most elaborate celebration of the virtues of Tom. He divorces Tom's disinterestedness and self-sacrifice from good

sense and proper self-assertion. He sentimentalizes abundantly about Tom; and he thinks it quite noble that Tom, when his heart and soul are touched to the quick by his love of Mary Graham, and he is ready to do anything grand and heroic to defend and protect her, should shut up the passion in his own breast, and be content to serve the cause of such a selfish snob as the younger Martin Chuzzlewit, who is only converted into a decently respectable young gentleman by the malarious fever which prostrates him in the American garden of Eden.

Much as we are compelled to like Tom, we feel that he fails in some of the distinctive qualities of manhood. In a right distribution of rewards and punishments, he should have married the heroine of the story; and a French novelist would have delighted in tracing the steps by which her soul, weaned from its first superficial affection, found its true mate in the noble soul, hidden to chance observers, which animated the somewhat grotesque figure and

gleamed through the awkward manners of Thomas Pinch. But Dickens introduces the fact of the deep, undying love of Tom for Mary, only as an illustration of Tom's constant habit of subordinating his own interest and happiness to the interest and happiness of others. And the worst of it is, that this sublime disinterestedness is associated with the idea of a certain unmanly feebleness, so that the humble hero and martyr, the one stainless character in the book, becomes in the end an object of a kind of compassionate benevolence, and impresses the reader as a person who was born to illustrate all the virtues of humanity, and to be shoved aside whenever any virtue is to be rewarded — on earth. Still the portrait is true, — cruelly true. Who, with any experience of life, has not met, loved, honored, and pitied Tom Pinch?

But the most original, the most "stupendous" character in the romance is Mrs. Gamp, accompanied, as she is, by her other self, Mrs. Harris. It is impossible for mere criticism to

do justice to this astonishing creation of humorous genius, a creation which Dickens never afterwards surpassed, which perhaps he never equaled. The most elaborate and minute study of this masterpiece can hardly detect a flaw in her characteristic speech or conduct. From beginning to end she is "one entire and perfect chrysolite," — Sairey Gamp and nobody else.

Forster tells us that the original hint of her character was derived from a nurse employed by a distinguished friend of Dickens to take charge of a sick friend. Among other "Gampish" peculiarities, she had a habit of rubbing "her nose along the top of the tall fender." This is all we know of the person who is supposed to have given the mere suggestion from which Dickens created the portly personage, as immortal as Dame Quickly or the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," who is familiarly known in every quarter of the globe where the English language is spoken.

Dickens first introduced her to the world

in the nineteenth chapter of "Martin Chuzzlewit," and was impatient to know Forster's opinion of her. "Tell me," he writes, "what you think of Mrs. Gamp? you 'll not find it easy to get through the hundreds of misprints in her conversation, but I want your opinion at once. I think you know already something of mine. I mean to make a mark with her."

And what a mark he did make! There is nothing to be said in praise of this character which can be expressed in any other language than that which Dickens invented for her special convenience. "If it was n't for the nerve a little sip of liquor gives me (I never was able to do more than taste it) I never could go through with what I sometimes has to do. 'Mrs. Harris,' I says, at the very last case I acted in, which it was but a young person, 'Mrs. Harris,' I says, 'leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and don't ask me to take none, but let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged, and then I will do what I 'm engaged to do, according to the best of my ability.'

'Mrs. Gamp,' she says in answer, 'if ever there was a sober creetur to be got at eighteenpence a day for working people, and three and six for gentlefolks — night watching,'" said Mrs. Gamp with peculiar emphasis, "'being a extra charge — you are that inwallable person.' 'Mrs. Harris,' I says to her, 'don't name the charge, for if I could afford to lay all my fellow creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it, sich is the love I bears 'em. But what I always says to them as has the management of matters, be they gents or be they ladies — is, don't ask me whether I won't take none, or whether I will, but leave the bottle on the chimley-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged.'"

In discoursing with Mrs. Harris on the death of husbands, she refers pathetically to her own mate: "There's a wooden leg gone likeways home to its own account, which in its constancy of walkin' into wine vaults, and never comin' out again till fetched by force, was quite as weak as flesh, if not weaker."

In regard to her knowledge of secrets in families, she professes that "the torters of the Imposition" could not wring them from her reticent tongue. When she hears of Bailey Junior's death, she philosophically observes, that "he was born into a wale, and he lived in a wale, and he must take the consequences of sech a sitiwation." When Ruth Pinch tells her the position of the Antwerp packet among the vessels in the river, she wishes the "Ankworks package was in Jonadge's belly," — thus slightly confounding, or, as she would say, "confuging," the relative positions of the prophet and the whale. She informs Mr. Mould, the undertaker, that "the blessing of a daughter was deniged me; which if we had had one, Gamp would certainly have drunk its little shoes right off its feet, as with our precious boy he did, and afterwards send the child a errand to sell his wooden leg for any money it would fetch as matches in the rough, and bring it home in liquor: which was truly done beyond his years, for ev'ry individgle

penny that child lost at toss or buy for kidney ones; and come home afterwards quite bold, to break the news, and offering to drown himself if sech would be a satisfaction to his parents."

In fact we cannot refrain, in contemplating the perfections of Mrs. Gamp, from participating in the enthusiasm of her friend the undertaker, whose business was doubtless increased by her ministrations at the sick bed. "She 's the sort of woman now," said Mr. Mould to his wife, "one would almost feel disposed to bury for nothing, and do it neatly too!" But the real distinction of Mrs. Gamp, considered as a feat of humorous characterization, consists in this, that what she says is less mirth-provoking than what she *is*. The sayings may be forgotten by the reader; but no reader ever forgets the character.

But the variety of character in "Martin Chuzzlewit" is not more notable than the felicitous way in which the characters are brought into contact or collision, so as to produce

humorous scenes and incidents. The meeting of the Chuzzlewit relations in Mr. Pecksniff's parlor, when the elder Martin is supposed to be at the point of death; the dinner given by the boarders at Todgers's to Pecksniff and his daughters; the death and burial of old Anthony Chuzzlewit, with all the comically ghastly hypocrisies attending them; the interview between Mrs. Gamp and Mr. Mould; the banquet which enables Tigg Montague to introduce Jonas Chuzzlewit to Mr. Wolf, the editor, and Mr. Pip, the theatrical manager; the parting of Mrs. Gamp with Poll Sweedlepipe and Bailey Junior, as she departs for the country in charge of Lewsome; the meeting of the Chuzzlewit family on the occasion of the proposed marriage of Miss Charity Pecksniff with Mr. Augustus Moddle; the quarrel between Mrs. Gamp and Betsey Prig; and the scene which Thackeray thought the best in the novel, that in which Pecksniff is overreached by the magnificent impostor Tigg, in league with the coarse ruffian, his

own son-in-law, — are all first-rate comedy, even if at times the comedy borders on farce.

Scattered over the novel, — peeping out here and there when least expected, — there are felicities, of phrase or description, which give that shock of pleased surprise to the reader which betrays the hand of a master. Perhaps many of Dickens's contemporaries might have described equally well the understood connection between General Choke and Zephaniah Scadder, in the scheme to swindle young Martin out of the little money he possessed; but nobody but Dickens could have represented the General as modestly retiring from the room where the bargain was going on, seating himself in a rocking-chair in the front office, and gazing at the prospect, "like a good Samaritan, waiting for a traveller."

Again, Tom Pinch, with a provincial's distrust of the knaveries of London, determines not to ask of any persons in the streets the way to Furnival's Inn, because he suspects he may become the prey of sharpers. In case, how-

ever, he should find himself near the Mint or the Bank of England, he would have no hesitation in stepping in and asking a civil question, "confiding in the perfect respectability of the concern." The absconding Augustus Moddle, in his farewell letter to Miss Pecksniff, declares to her, that "frequently — when you have sought to soothe my brow with kisses — has self-destruction flashed across me. Frequently — incredible as it may seem — have I abandoned the idea." Mrs. Gamp could pardon Betsey Prig in many things, but the words she spoke denying the existence of Mrs. Harris were such as "lambs could not forgive nor worms forget." There is something deliciously comical in the grand style assumed by the transcendental Miss Codger, when she is introduced to the Honorable Elijah Pogram. "To be presented," she solemnly declares, "*to* a Pogram *by* a Hominy, indeed, a thrilling moment is it in its impressiveness on what we call our feelings!"

The most powerful serious passages in the

romance are those devoted to Jonas Chuzzlewit, from the time he resolved to murder Tigg to the time of his capture after the murder had been committed. The sentences throb with the life of all the varying passions they record — hatred, wrath, revenge, hope, fear, and despair. Nadgett is a good specimen of the detective police that follow all the turns and windings of a criminal's course, in his external acts; but Dickens, a member of the detective police of the mind, takes his position in the soul of the criminal, observes all his emotions, thoughts, and volitions, and never intermits his steady gaze at the phenomena presented by the criminal heart, until the desire to murder, settling into the purpose to murder, finds at last expression in the outward act of murder; and then, still present as a witness of the murderer's thoughts and passions, he watches and notes all the perturbations of his soul, due not to remorse but to a craven fear of discovery. There is no space here to note other instances in the novel, where this power

of observing souls is as apparent as the power of describing their external manifestations.

Dickens, when he was trying to decide on a name for his novel, discussed with Forster whether it should be Martin Sweezelder, or Sweezleback, or Sweezegag, or Martin Chuzzletoe, Chuzzleboy, Chubbelwrig, or Chuzzlewig. Chuzzlewit was selected at last. The determination to give a quaint title to the book, so that it should of itself excite attention, was carried out in the final choice.[1]

[1] The wrapper to No. 1 of the original serial edition bore the very elaborate legend: "THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT, HIS RELATIVES, FRIENDS, AND ENEMIES, COMPRISING ALL HIS WILLS AND HIS WAYS: WITH AN HISTORICAL RECORD OF WHAT HE DID, AND WHAT HE DID N'T; SHOWING, MOREOVER, WHO INHERITED THE FAMILY PLATE, WHO CAME IN FOR THE SILVER SPOONS, AND WHO FOR THE WOODEN LADLES. THE WHOLE FORMING A COMPLETE KEY TO THE HOUSE OF CHUZZLEWIT. EDITED BY BOZ. WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY 'PHIZ.'"

IX

DOMBEY AND SON

On the first of June, 1844, six weeks before his departure for Italy, Dickens severed his connection with his publishers, Chapman & Hall, and entered into an agreement with Bradbury & Evans, by the terms of which they were, on an advance to him of £2,800, without interest, to have a fourth share in whatever he might write during the ensuiug eight years. "The Chimes," "The Cricket on the Hearth," and "Pictures from Italy" were published during his prolonged absence from England.

The early numbers of "Dombey and Son" were written at Lausanne, Switzerland.[1] The publication of the work, in shilling numbers,

[1] The parts as issued bore the fuller title "Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation."

extended from October, 1846, to April, 1848. It had a great success from the start. Macaulay wrote to a friend that the passage regarding Florence, in the first number, made him cry as if his heart would break. Indeed, the work proved unmistakably that the vacation Dickens had given his genius had both improved its quality and increased its power. In none of his previous works had he shown such continuous vigor of style, such penetration of thought, such certainty of characterization, and such felicity in blending his description with his imaginations.

Up to the time of the death of Paul Dombey, all his critics admit that he is incomparably good, after his own peculiar fashion; but many of them consider that the remaining three quarters of the book do not meet the expectations, which were raised by the first five numbers. Certainly, much of Mr. Dombey, Edith, Mrs. Skewton, and the whole family of the Carkers, might have been spared with gain to the interest of the story, though it is

on these characters that the author seems to have labored most elaborately, and in delineating some of them found opportunities for displaying unexpected power; but still the scenes which precede or follow those which are deemed long-winded, the scenes which give full play to all that is attractive and pathetic, and to all that is attractive and laughable, in the sayings and doings of Florence, Susan Nipper, Mrs. MacStinger, Captain Cuttle, Mr. Perch, Mr. Toots, Bunsby, Sol Gills, Cousin Feenix, not to mention others, make us tolerant of the materials for high tragedy that Carker, Mr. Dombey, and Edith are somewhat slowly accumulating. John Carker, his sister, and Mr. Morfin, "good Missis Brown" and her "hansome gal," might have been retrenched with great advantage to the movement of the narrative.

But "padding" of this sort we must expect in all novels, even when written by men of genius. The fact remains that, after reading the book a dozen or twenty times, its

wealth of incident and character, of thought and imagination, of description and satire, of uncontrollable fun and overwhelmingly pathetic sentiment, becomes more and more manifest. We envy a possible generation of readers who, rejoicing and exulting in some new original genius, can afford to neglect the genius which vivifies the pages of "Dombey and Son."

In the letters of Dickens to Forster during the composition of the novel, there is much light shed on the processes of its growth. His primary purpose was to exhibit, in carefully delineated characters, the various exemplifications of pride, as, in "Martin Chuzzlewit," he had exhibited those of selfishness. Some critics thought, at the time of the serial publication of "Dombey," that he killed little Paul, as Shakespeare was said to have killed Mercutio, because the continuation of his life exacted from him more effort than his genius could sustain. It appears, however, that the early death of Paul was an essential part of

the original design of the story. It was also intended from the beginning that Mr. Dombey's stony pride should crumble and fall in the end. Dickens's letter to his friend is plain on this point. Yet a distinguished French critic, M. Taine, a critic who has written brilliantly on English literature only to obscure its inmost English spirit and essence, has declared that a good novel was spoiled by Mr. Dombey's ignominious breakdown at the close. He attributes this violation of the logic of character to Dickens's adherence to the ordinary Englishman's notion of what was moral and "proper."

He evidently had in mind, in making the criticism, a class of Balzac's creations, the main purpose of which is to portray individuals whose natures are so dominated by a single passion, that it at last becomes a monomania, a form of madness. There is no sanity in the avarice of Grandet, in "Eugénie Grandet"; in the libertinism of Hulot, in "La Cousine Bette"; in the wild thirst for unattainable

knowledge which impels Claës, in "La Recherche de l'Absolu," to sacrifice everything and everybody to his scientific dream. According to Balzac's own theory, these men are not responsible human beings, and should not be considered as objects either of praise or of blame. Indeed, he felicitates himself on the skill with which he indicates the gradual steps by which a sensible man passes into a madman, when one element of his complex being insensibly obtains a mastery over all the others, until at last affection, conscience, intellect, and will become subordinate to one ruling propensity. His characters of this kind are most assuredly edifying studies in ethical science; they are admirable as admonitions, for they show how terrific is the pace of habit towards a kind of lunacy when it has once obtained a dominion over character; but still, in real life, such persons rarely reach that completeness of narrowness, that perfection of imperfection, which is the vague ideal towards which they dimly strive. Other influences come in, of suf-

ficient force to restore, in some slight degree, the balance of their natures. Conscience lends its warning voice, and intellect its warning light, to protect them from the worst consequences of their diseased self-indulgence; and, under all, the will obscurely asserts itself as a power, feebly striving to do what conscience and intellect enjoin. What is called the logic of character is thus happily prevented from carrying out its baleful deductions by a large variety of saving fallacies and regenerating *non sequiturs*.

Dickens, in his original conception of Mr. Dombey, certainly had no more idea of making pride dominant in him to the last, than he had of making selfishness dominant to the last in Martin Chuzzlewit. He probably never read, or at least he never sympathized with, those characters of Balzac on which Mr. Dombey might seem to have been modelled; and M. Taine's criticism fails, not only from his misconception of Dickens's method of characterization, but from his oversight of numerous

intimations, throughout the book, that fate and Florence were in the end to be more than a match for Mr. Dombey's pride.

There was one change in Dickens's design for which his admirers must be grateful. He intended at first to disappoint the expectations of readers as to the character of Walter Gay, who, as the story stands, is the most fitting of lovers and husbands that could be imagined for Florence Dombey. Everybody must remember the chapter in which Walter is first introduced. He is there represented as a thoroughly healthy, ingenuous, adventurous, heroic lad, glorying in the narratives of heroism and self-reliance displayed by captains and crew, in times of peril and shipwreck, and giving evidence of a power in himself to do and suffer what his favourite heroes had done and suffered. After this exhilarating introduction, it was Dickens's intention "to show him gradually and naturally trailing away from that love of adventure and boyish lightheartedness into negligence, idleness, dissipation,

dishonesty, and ruin. To show, in short, that common, every-day, miserable declension of which we know so much in our ordinary life; to exhibit something of the philosophy of it in great temptations and an easy nature; and to show how the good turns to bad, by degrees. If I kept some little notion of Florence always at the bottom of it, I think it might be made very powerful and very useful. What do you think? Do you think it might be done without making people angry?"

Forster is to be thanked for telling him that it would "make people angry"; and the original idea, somewhat modified, was reserved for a more fitting character, that of Richard Carstone, in "Bleak House."

As to Mr. Dombey himself, it is to be said that Dickens never appears to have thoroughly penetrated into the heart of the character he has so elaborately drawn in all its exterior manifestations. His antipathy interferes with his insight; and perhaps Dombey never becomes really alive except in that pathetic scene

at the end, where his rejected daughter saves him from self-inflicted death. His proud self-withdrawal from vital sympathy with all persons, includes his own creator, Dickens himself. His brain, his heart, his imagination, are all frozen, — with slight meltings, here and there, as they are touched by the fire of rage or revenge. We have pride impersonated, rather than a proud man; and the impersonation is not so much of pride in its spiritual essence, as of pride in its outward forms.

This peculiarity seems to have impressed the Game Chicken, the prize-fighter, whom Mr. Toots brings as a witness of Dombey's second marriage, for the purpose of obtaining from him as an opinion as to the possibility of softening the inflexibility of his projected father-in-law. The Game Chicken whispers hoarsely to his employer: "He 's as stiff a cove as ever I see; but," he complacently adds, "it 's within the resources of science to double him up, with one blow in the waiscoat." This criticism might be received as the author's own

testimony to the fact that Dombey impresses most readers as a man whose pride is indicated, not so much by the force of his personality, as by the carriage of his person. His constant attitudinizing in the style of Mr. Pitt; his standing back to the fire, with his hands under his coat-tails; his erect, unbending figure; the haughtiness with which he lifts his head; his curt, supercilious speech; and other insolent follies, common to the affectations of pretentious and brainless pride, — are all external signs which are by no means the measure of any great thing signified. The Game Chicken is right in his judgment, that such a person could be easily "doubled up."

There have been and are to-day many examples of strong and bright souls, fiercely, irrationally, even cruelly, proud; but Mr. Dombey has but a mere flicker of soul, and he is hopelessly stupid. His lack of intelligence is fatal to his pretensions as the head of a great mercantile firm. The necessities of such a position demand an incessant play and flexibility of

intellect. No man, however large his capital, can trade to all parts of the world, merely following a machine process of business routine, without being a bankrupt in the course of a year; and of the mental qualifications of a great merchant not a trace is to be found in Mr. Dombey. It may be said that Mr. Carker supplies this intellectual deficiency; but no head clerk can compensate for imbecility in an employer who arrogantly manages his own business; and up to a certain time, Dickens represents Dombey as doing this.

It is to be borne in mind that Carker's sycophancy and intelligence are employed to ruin the firm of Dombey and Son,—to undo what Dombey has done; and of the mental power implied in creating such a colossal commercial establishment, the Dombey of Dickens gives not the remotest hint. Novelists and poets are all liable to make a similar mistake, because, in their scorn of unpoetic and unromantic millionaires, they overlook the reason, the judgment, the imagination,—exercised in

regions of activity foreign to their own, — by which merchants of exceptional capacity become millionaires.

While Mr. Dombey cannot be said to be a character in the sense in which other persons in the book are characters; while it must be said that he has not the living individuality of a proud man, or of a vital impersonation of pride, he still, in his accompaniments, accessories, and effects, furnishes abundant opportunities for Dickens to display more than his usual humor and pathos. The funeral of Dombey's first wife, we are told, was performed "to the entire satisfaction of the undertaker, as well as of the neighborhood at large." This stroke of satire is excellent; but the incidents of little Paul's christening are still better. "Arrived at the church steps," the august company was received "by a portentous beadle. Mr. Dombey dismounted first, to help the ladies out, and standing near the beadle at the church-door, looked like another beadle. A beadle less gorgeous, but

more dreadful; the beadle of private life; the beadle of our business and our bosoms." The beadle of the Church "gives a bow and a half-smile of recognition" to the beadle of Business, "importing that he remembered to have had the pleasure of attending on him when he buried his first wife, and *hoped he had enjoyed himself since.*" The chill collation which followed the christening in Mr. Dombey's bleak dining-room, "looking more like a dead dinner lying in state than a social refreshment," gave the company a shiver which resisted the warmth of wine, and froze the very baby in honor of whose appearance in the world the collation was given.

The frost that gathers around pride was never better exemplified than in the account of this seemingly joyous feast, iced as it was by the presence and manner of the great refrigerator, Mr. Dombey himself; — he, indifferent to the comfort of his guests, exulting inwardly in the idea that the firm of Dombey and Son was no longer a fiction, for there the

junior partner palpably was, a living child, crooning, crying, shivering on the lap of Polly Toodle, and with all his chilled relations and friends present, anxious to do the little creature reverence as the future hope and support of an illustrious mercantile house.

The scenes of courtship, conducted in the frigid zone of sentiment, between Mr. Dombey, merchant, and Edith Granger, widow, are arctic in the extreme. Here pride is set against pride, the pride of the aristocracy of wealth arrayed in opposition to the pride of the aristocracy of birth, for the purpose of making a mock marriage, a formal union, between two incompatible human beings. Mr. Dombey is so dull that he cannot discern Edith's contempt of him. He likes her all the more because she is so superbly haughty. He thinks that, in marrying such a creature, two high mightinesses will be united, with the result that his own importance will be magnified by his possession of such a wife. Her part in life is to look *down* on the generality of human

beings, and to look *up* to him. He is not disturbed by Edith's manner to him previously to the marriage, for "he had that good reason for sympathy with haughtiness and coldness, which is found in a fellow feeling." He was flattered at the notion of having such a stately woman doing the honors of his house, "and chilling his guests after his own fashion."

Edith's self-assertion is intensified by self-contempt. She feels that, in marrying Dombey, she has sold herself for money; and her sense of degradation makes her the more insolently cold and apathetic in the presence of him whom she looks upon as her purchaser. She sees in every particular item of the splendors that surround her in the house of her detested husband, "some hateful atom of her purchase-money." Thinking that all who met her supposed that she was as degraded as she felt herself to be, she veiled the torments of a fierce, passionate, wounded, womanly heart under an indomitable haughtiness of demeanor.

Mr. Dombey soon ascertains that Mrs.

Dombey defies as well as despises him. Mr. Carker is then foolishly introduced by his discomfited employer, as a fit medium of communication between himself and his alienated wife, — the proud dolt thinking that his man of business could manage his domestic as satisfactorily as his commercial affairs.

Carker, like most of Dickens's villains, never rises to the dignity of wickedness, such as it is depicted by Shakespeare and Scott. He is a smiling villain, a villain somewhat too prodigal in the exhibition of his white teeth and red gums, a villain of melodrama rather than of tragedy. Still he illustrates an important truth, which arrogant men constantly overlook in the pleasure they receive from the abject submission of their parasites. A sycophant of ability naturally hates him on whom he fawns. Those who lick the feet of their nominal superiors are ever on the watch for opportunities to cut off their heads. Carker, strong in his sense of intellectual power, detests the master before whom he cringes, and

is determined to revenge himself tenfold for every act of politic humiliation which he reluctantly and resentfully performs. Dickens constantly compares him to a cat, — sleek, clean, purring, scratching, snarling, tearing, according to the circumstances of the case, — much, we think, to the injustice of the cat. In his office room he is represented as "sly of manner, sharp of tooth, soft of foot, watchful of eye, oily of tongue, cruel of heart, nice of habit," sitting with "a dainty steadfastness and patience at his work, as if he were waiting at a mouse's hole."

This low, sensual, crawling, bullying villain, a sycophant to those above him, a tyrant to those below him, is ambitious to blast his patron's pride, not only by ruining him in fortune, but by covering him with domestic dishonor. He apparently succeeds in both designs; but the superb Edith hates him worse than she hates Mr. Dombey; and he finds, in the end, that he is merely a tool in her hands to wreak her revenge on her husband, and is

driven scornfully from her presence only to meet a horrible death, just as his pursuers have come upon him to propose a kind of honorable one. Carker does not deserve the space awarded to him in the novel. He has none of that ideal interest which Shakespeare confers on Iago and Edmund, and Scott on Varney and Rashleigh Osbaldistone. He is a melodramatic villain, who becomes at last a bore as well as a rascal.

Of the pathetic and humorous portions of the novel, it is difficult to speak in terms of too warm praise. The character of Florence is one of those ideal representations of innocence and filial affection which Dickens delighted to draw. She is a great advance on Little Nell, because she is faithfully portrayed, not only as a child and as a girl, but as a wife and mother, preserving throughout all the stages of her development her primitive simplicity, affectionateness, guilelessness, and fidelity to the instincts and inspirations of her pure and gentle heart. Fathers are so rarely

blessed with such daughters, that the wonder is, how such a piece of half-petrified flesh as Dombey, the incarnation of stolid and stupid pride, can resist the mute, tender, timid appeals which she makes on his suspicious, jealous, hardened sensibilities; for they compel the eyes, even of sullen and cynical critics, to stream with reluctant tears. Her innocence and loveliness soften all hearts but one, and that is the obdurate heart of the father, whom she passionately desires to serve and console.

She glides through the book like a beautiful and beneficent domestic spirit of kindness and love. In the opening chapter she is seen in the embrace of her dying mother, who, "clinging fast to that slight spar within her arms, drifted out upon the dark and unknown sea that rolls round all the world." Then again she appears to the astonished nurse of her baby brother, with the imperative question, "What have you done with my mamma?" The scene which follows, in which good Polly Toodle takes the stricken child to her breast,

and soothes her with a vision of her mother in heaven, touches the inmost springs of emotion. Throughout the brief existence of little Paul her life is bound up in his; and the odd, old-fashioned boy, weaving continally "the arabesque work of his musing fancy," and making himself the misunderstood wonder of Mrs. Pipchin and the Blimbers, is understood clearly by his sister, his "darling Floy." In dying, he testifies to the immortality of the affections, by clinging to Florence, as the mother of both had clung to her, when drifting away to "the unknown sea.

It is in thus holding on to the one supreme object of earthly love that the dying mortal most confidently puts on immortality. The weak, physical bond, feebly fastening on hand, neck, and breast, anxious to delay the moment of parting, is an assurance of the spiritual bond, which connects the life on earth with the mysterious life beyond the grave. Few doctors of divinity have done so much to sanctify death-beds as Dickens has done in

the scene in which the mother of Florence dies with her daughter clasped tightly to her breast, and the scene in which little Paul dies, with his arms around his sister, "putting his hands together as he had been used to do at his prayers," but folding them behind her neck, so as not to lose his loving hold on her. So should the dying ever leave the living. Love annihilates death in consecrating it; and its immortality is most assured when, in weariness or pain, it clings to some beloved earthly object, as it prepares to cross the dread threshold of its everlasting home.

The short life of little Paul is associated with Mrs. Pipchin's Brighton "Castle," and Dr. Blimber's Brighton School. Mrs. Pipchin is drawn from the life; for Dickens, when a boy, was placed under her charge; and he probably participated in the feelings of his own Master Bitherstone, whose parents were in Bengal, and who, being once subjected to more than the usual exasperations proceeding from Mrs. Pipchin's ill temper, "began that

very night to make arrangements for an overland return voyage to India, by secreting from his supper a quarter of a round of bread and a fragment of moist Dutch cheese, as the beginning of a stock of provision to support him on the voyage." Mrs. Pipchin was considered a great manager of children, the secret of her management being "to give them everything that they did n't like, and nothing that they did." Her religion is of a piece with all her other qualities. When poor Miss Pankey, who is described as "a mild little blue-eyed morsel of a child," happened to sniff after being shampooed, she was appropriately punished, "and instructed that nobody who sniffed before visitors ever went to heaven."

Paul, however real he seems to the imagination, may be an impossible child, and Dickens indeed compares him, as he sits brooding in his miniature arm-chair, to "one of those terrible little beings in the Fairy Tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age, fantastically represent the children for

whom they have been substituted"; but strange and old as he appears, he takes strong hold on the sympathies of readers, and ranks with the most original and attractive of the many quaint children born in Dickens-land. Assuming the character to be sufficiently natural for the purposes of romance, there can be no doubt as to the skill displayed in its delineation and development. Nothing can be more grotesque than the picture of him, sitting by the side of Mrs. Pipchin, spending hours in steadily gazing on that matron's mottled face, and black bombazine drapery, with the old black cat, coiled up on the centre foot of the fender, "purring egotistically, and winking at the fire." It would have been, it is added, "quite in keeping with the appearance of the party if they had all sprung up the chimney in the high wind one night, and never been heard of any more."

Paul's weeping nurse, Mrs. Wickam, observant of these eccentricities, and troubled by the general "gashliness" of the "ogress's castle," — so suggestive of the Peruvian mines in

which Mr. Pipchin had broken his fortunes and his heart, — grows more doleful as the days drag on, and commits to Miss Berinthia her dismal apprehensions, that little Paul will share the fate of her "uncle's Betsy Jane." The cramps, says Mrs. Wickam solemnly, "was as common to her as biles is to yourself, Miss Berry."

The scene in which Paul is introduced to Dr. Blimber, and regularly installed in his educational establishment, and, indeed, the account of his whole residence there, ending with the scene of the ball, are in Dickens's finest vein both of humor and pathos. The fading little creature wishes that everybody should like him, as he prepares to depart from the forcing school in which he has been improperly placed; and all the signs of approaching death are visible in his old-fashioned ways, as he pathetically wishes to be remembered kindly by his teachers and school-fellows. One is forced to sympathize with Susan Nipper's denunciation, when, stating one of the causes of

his rapid decline, she sharply exclaims to Walter Gay: "Oh, them Blimbers!"

Among Paul's companions at Dr. Blimber's, the most notable is Mr. Toots, — the survivor, but still the victim, of the doctor's indiscriminate system of forcing into all heads an amount of Latin and Greek which only a few heads are capacious enough to receive. Toots must be considered one of Dickens's most delicious characterizations, in that domain of character in which he preëminently excelled, namely, the representation of individuals in whom benevolence of feeling is combined with imperfection of intellect. Toots's poor brain stutters whenever he attempts to express a good impulse. The stuttering is not of the obstructed tongue, but of the hesitating mind. Thought never more than half forms the good notion that rushes up from his good heart; and the result is chuckling, gasping, choking, hard-drawn breaths, — the physical signs of his expectation that the right words will come, but ever ending in a swift retreat

to some familiar phrase in which he has become accustomed to embody his interior sense of self-*in*sufficiency.

Owing to excessive cramming, "he began, as soon as he had whiskers, to leave off having brains." He used "to write long letters to himself from persons of distinction, addressed, 'P. Toots, Esquire, Brighton, Sussex,' and to preserve them in his desk with great care." His scenes of dissipation with Mr. Feeder, B.A., appeared to little Paul "reckless occasions," though they had for the wondering boy "a dread charm." Thus Mr. Toots covertly purchased on the shingle a bundle of cigars "from a most desperate smuggler, who had acknowledged, in confidence, that two hundred pounds was the price set upon his head, dead or alive, by the Custom House." Any attempt to smoke these was successful only in the sense of throwing Mr. Toots into a state of distressing faintness. Again, he bought a large jar of snuff, "for which he paid a high price, as having been the genuine

property of the Prince Regent." Neither he nor Mr. Feeder "could partake of this, or any other snuff, even in the most stinted and moderate degree, without being seized with convulsions of sneezing. Nevertheless, it was their great delight to moisten a box-full with cold tea, stir it up on a parchment with a paper knife, and devote themselves to its consumption then and there. In the course of which cramming of their noses, they endured surprising torments with the constancy of martyrs: and, drinking table-beer at intervals, felt all the glories of dissipation."

It is an immense stroke of humor to represent him, when he comes into his property, as taking a prize-fighter, the Game Chicken, under his protection, on the ground that he was "the conqueror of the Nobby Shropshire One." Perhaps, however, his adoration of Florence Dombey brings out most effectively all the lovableness, all the oddity, and all the laughable incoherences of his character; but the scenes in which this hopeless attachment

is most humorously displayed, are those in which "Captain Ed'ard Cuttle, Mariner," appears as a main actor.

Captain Cuttle labors, like Toots, under a certain obstruction of linguistic expression; he has a similar simplicity of nature, but there is in the captain a massiveness of manhood, to which Toots can make no pretension; and nobody ever supposed the characters to be alike. The big heart of the captain finds a more adequate outlet in words than the inferior article lodged in the frame of Mr. Toots. In the captain's slow mind there is a confused jumble of phrases, gathered from many sources, ranging from the Seaman's Songster to the Prayer Book and the Bible. These he misquotes or half quotes, perfectly satisfied with their applicability to the occasions which call them forth, although, as he is uncertain as to his authorities, he has, on each occasion, to request his listener to "overhaul the book it's in, and thereof make a note."

Up to the time that Sol Gills, the Ship's

Instrument Maker, places him in command of his shop, his appearance on the scene is always sure of being delightfully welcome to the reader; but it is only after that event that he comes out in full force. His performance of his new duties as a seller of ship's instruments, is best described by his confidential clerk, Rob the Grinder. "There ain't no bus'-niss done, you see. He don't know anything about it, the cap'en don't. There was a man come into the shop this very day, and says, 'I want a so-and-so,' he says — some hard name or another. 'A which?' says the cap'-en, 'A so-and-so,' says the man. 'Brother,' says the cap'en,' 'will you take a observation round the shop?' 'Well,' says the man, 'I 've done it.' 'Do you see wot you want?' says the cap'en. 'No, I don't,' says the man. 'Do you know it, wen you *do* see it?' says the cap'en. 'No, I don't,' says the man. 'Why, then I tell you wot, my lad,' says the cap'en, 'you 'd better go back and ask wot it 's like, outside, for no more don't I.'" However, as

the shop with the sign of the Little Midshipman is rarely troubled with a customer, the most that the captain has to do is to keep guard on the stock.

All the incidents which relieve the solitude of his shop are full of humor, or pathos, or of an odd combination of the two. The captain's farewell to "Wal'r"; his reading of Sol Gills's will, in presence of Jack Bunsby; the sudden appearance of Mrs. MacStinger and children, and Bunsby's rescue of him from the endearments of that excellent woman; the flight of Florence, and the scenes which succeed with the recovered Walter and Mr. Toots; and finally the captain's grand attempt to save his friend Bunsby from an enforced marriage with his former dreaded landlady,—are all indelibly associated in the English imagination with "Ed'ard Cuttle, Mariner, of England, as lives at home at ease, and doth improve each shining hour."

But among these, the great event of the book is that in which Florence, flying from the

father who in his rage had brutally struck her down, makes her way through the London streets to the quarters of the Little Midshipman, and falls senseless on the threshold of the parlor before the eyes of the astonished captain. The incidents which follow have a grotesque pathos almost unexampled, even in the works of Dickens. The meeting of these two innocents — for in "ignorance of the world's ways and the world's perplexities and dangers, they were nearly on a level" — is indescribably touching. After lavishing upon her all the attentions that his great heart can suggest, the captain peeps into the little chamber where she lies moaning in her sleep; and, with "a perfect awe of her youth, beauty, and sorrow," raises her head, adjusts the coat that covers her where it has fallen off, darkens the window a little more that she might sleep on, and all this "with a touch and tread as light as Florence's own." Long may it remain, the author adds, "in this mixed world a point not easy of decision, which is the more

beautiful evidence of the Almighty's goodness — the delicate fingers that are formed for sensitiveness and sympathy of touch, and made to minister to pain and grief, or the rough, hard Captain Cuttle hand which the heart teaches, guides, and softens in a moment!"

Mr. Toots appears, again and again, in the incidents which precede Walter's marriage with Florence, and ever blossoming out in new delicious absurdities. When informed of Walter's marvellous escape from shipwreck, he tells him, in his flurried manner, "I 'm afraid you must have got very wet. . . . I hope you did n't catch cold!" Indeed, if Toots could have been introduced to that German emperor, after he had waited for three days, in his penance shirt, bareheaded and barefooted, in the snow, to propitiate Gregory the Seventh, his instant impulse of benevolence would have been to put the question: "I trust your Majesty did n't catch cold?" He tells Florence that, when he indiscreetly made to her a declaration of love at Brighton, he

felt that he had conducted himself "much more like a Parricide than a person of independent property." The marriage of "that innocentest creetur Toots" to the sharp and combative Susan Nipper, who gave him this (by no means flattering) designation, may appear strange; but then, it is to be remembered that they agreed in adoring Miss Dombey; and two persons may reasonably expect to be happy when they have a common admiration for a third. Fielding himself, one of the great masters of characterization, married the affectionate maid of his first wife, because her tears mingled constantly with his in bewailing the loss of her whom both united in believing the paragon of her sex.

Passing from the circle of Sol Gills, Captain Cuttle, Walter Gay, Mr. Toots, Florence, and Susan Nipper, the first person who deserves special mention is Major Joe Bagstock, the growling, bullying, swaggering, and bragging sycophant of Mr. Dombey. His character is perhaps best expressed in the fact,

that his dark, nameless East Indian servant always responds to any vituperative designation which his irascible master launches at him, as if that were his real name, at least for the moment. The major's favorite and ever recurring form of self-felicitation is, "Tough, sir, is Joe, tough, and de-vil-ish sly!" This refrain seems to have been caught from a widely different character, little Isaac, the cunning and gleefully knavish Jew in Sheridan's opera of "The Duenna," who is continually congratulating himself on being "roguish, perhaps, but keen, devilish keen!" The selfish and greedy major is supremely capable of two pleasures: namely, the gratification of his malice and the gratification of his appetite; and when an opportunity occurs to gratify both at once, he leers and chokes like an "overfed Mephistopheles," and is in danger of being carried to another and worse world by an attack of apoplexy. He is so diverting that the reader finds his sense of humor in constant conflict with his sense of justice, because in the deserved

death of the major he would lose a richly ludicrous object to laugh at.

J. B.'s mode of recommending himself to Dombey is by a fierce self-assertion, only controlled by the respect which the power and presence of that great man compel him to pay, and which, he gives Mr. Dombey to understand, he did not yield even to his former friends, their Royal Highnesses, the Dukes of York and Kent. His sympathy with the afflicted father, after the death of little Paul, is marked by this kind of bullying, blustering servility. "'Mr. Dombey, sir,' said the major, 'Joey B. is not in general a man of sentiment, for Joseph is tough. But Joe has his feelings, sir, when they *are* awakened. — Damme, Mr. Dombey,' cried the major with sudden ferocity, 'this is weakness, and I won't submit to it. It is not,' he added, 'for an old soldier of the Bagstock breed to deliver himself up, a prey to his own emotions; but — damme, sir,' cried the major, in another spasm of ferocity, 'I condole with you!'"

Up to the time that Dombey fails, the major never relaxes in his bluff, choleric, and somewhat blasphemous obsequiousness. After the crash comes, he represents himself to the members of his club as having been "deceived, sir, taken in, hoodwinked, blindfolded," but he assures them that he is now "broad awake and staring"; and when he learns that his old flame and enemy, Miss Tox, still continues her timid attentions to the ruined merchant, he nearly "chokes himself dead with laughter," becomes permanently bluer in the face from that hour, "and constantly wheezes to himself, his lobster eyes starting out of his head, 'Damme, sir, the woman's a born idiot!'"

The paid domestics of Mr. Dombey's household are of the "Bagstock breed." They glory in their master while he is rich and famous, and desert him in disgust when he has the impudence to be unfortunate. Indeed, the tenants of Mr. Dombey's kitchen are more amusingly selfish than the guests of Mr. Dombey's par-

lors. Mr. Towlinson, the head servant, is well satisfied with his master's second marriage, with one exception. That exception is the whiskered foreigner, who is engaged to accompany the happy pair to Paris, and who is busy in packing their trunks for the journey. Mr. Towlinson gloomily expresses the opinion that he "never knew of any good that ever came of foreigners." When the ladies of the kitchen thereupon tax him with an unreasonable prejudice against that portion of mankind, he triumphantly retorts: "Look at Bonaparte, who was at the head of 'em, and see what *he* was always up to!" "Which," the housemaid says, "is very true." These servants submit with commendable forbearance to the elopement of Edith; but when her dishonored husband becomes a bankrupt, their moral feelings are fearfully aroused.

Mr. Perch, the messenger of Dombey and Son, — styled by Miss Susan Nipper as "that insipidest of his sex," that "wet curl-paper of a man," — is seduced by newsmongers into

taverns, and being asked somewhat too often what he would take to drink, ends in telling, in a low voice, the most incredible lies regarding the mental and moral state of his employer, just before his bankruptcy. "Might I make so bold as ask, sir, are you unhappy in your mind?" This was the question which Perch, overcome by beer or brandy, or a combination of both, had the audacity to assert he had put to Mr. Dombey, — a gentleman whom even the Game Chicken had declared to be "as stiff a cove as ever he see." But, according to the office messenger, Mr. Dombey had replied: "My faithful Perch — but no, it cannot be!" and with that had struck his hand upon his forehead, and said, "Leave me, Perch." Mrs. Perch, whose chief purpose in life seems to be to look out that the race of Perches shall not die out, penetrates into the kitchen of the august employer of her husband, and there, in the course of a nice collation, confides to the cook, the housemaid, and the rest, her matured opinion, that she does

not wonder Mr. Dombey shuts himself up in his room, "for what," says the good woman, "must his feelings be, if he was to come upon any of the poor servants that he once deceived into thinking him immensely rich."

Mrs. Pipchin, the housekeeper, is the last to leave. Having purchased, at the auction sale of the furniture, her master's favorite easy-chair, she departs to Brighton, for the purpose of resuming her functions as a murderer of children under the pretence of "managing" them. Before she goes, however, she gives Mrs. Chick a piece of her mind about Mr. Dombey. His seclusion in his room particularly exasperates her. "I called out to him yesterday, that I was of no use here, and that he had better let me send for Mrs. Richards. He grunted something or other that meant yes, and I sent. Grunt indeed! If he had been Mr. Pipchin he'd have had some reason to grunt. Yah! I've no patience with it!" The dark insinuation here about Mr. Pipchin seems to indicate that there was another cause of her

husband's decease than his mere failure in pumping water out of the Peruvian mines. "Had he been Mr. Pipchin he'd have had some reason to grunt." We agree cordially to this statement.

The novel is so rich in striking characters, that it is difficult to do justice to them all. Among the throng, we may slightly notice "Cousin Feenix," the good-natured, weak-natured, pauper noble, whose uncertain legs are ever carrying him to the gambling table; Jack Bunsby, with his gaze constantly directed to the coast of Greenland, but the object of Captain Cuttle's profound admiration, as "a man as has had his head broke from infancy up'ards, and has got a new opinion into it at every seam as has been opened"; Mrs. Skewton, the mother of Edith, a gorgeous and ghastly old woman, trying, as Sheridan would say, "to turn herself back into a girl," and who is so made up by her maid, that when she is undressed for bed she literally falls to pieces; Mr. Toodle, the railway stoker, who

regrets that his good feeling towards all the human family should find such inadequate expression in his voice, made gruff by the ashes getting into his chest, but, as he assures Miss Tox, "it *is* ashes, mum, not crustiness"; Polly Toodle, his buxom, apple-faced wife, modest, industrious, conscientious, affectionate, and grateful, and of whom her bashful, awkward husband justly says, "to them which is in adversity your face, Polly, is a cord'l"; Mrs. Chick, who believes that all the misfortunes of life come from the strange refusal of the ruined or the dying "to make an effort"; Dr. Blimber, who always has on hand a supply of learning for a hundred pupils, but restricting himself to a tenth of that number, gorges "the unhappy ten" with the whole of it; Mrs. Blimber, who afflicts the shade of the great Roman orator by her imbecile admiration, and is continually declaring that if she "could have known Cicero, and been his friend, and talked with him in his retirement at Tusculum (beau-ti-ful Tusculum!) she could have died

contented"; Miss Cornelia Blimber, "dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages," digging "them up like a Ghoul," "a fair sexton in spectacles"; and the irrepressible Susan Nipper, with too much vigor and velocity of mind and temper to heed punctuation marks in her impulsive discourse, but ever ready for a combat to the death with any and all persons who cast the least slight on "Miss Floy," and even carrying her audacity to the pitch of invading the private room of Mr. Dombey, and, in a wonderfully humorous scene, sharply and swiftly rebuking him, then and there, for his haughty indifference to the affection of his daughter, as viewed from the Nipper "standpoint."

There is no space left to call the reader's attention to the many remarkable instances of Dickens's descriptive power, as displayed in "Dombey and Son." Whether he describes town or country, the accuracy of his observation is not so much to be wondered at, as the strength of imagination by which he makes

everything his mind touches alive, and gives a kind of personality, almost of self-consciousness, to all objects that meet his eye. Whether the thing described be a landscape or a boot-jack, this vitalizing and individualizing power operates with almost equal force; and, in the present novel, it may be said that this power reaches its intensest expression, in respect both to freshness and quaintness.

Of the many felicities of thought and phrase, profusely scattered over the work, it may perhaps, in conclusion, be permitted to refer to one. It is obvious, after a moment's reflection, that if we could follow the sun in his course, there would be to us no night. It happens that this pregnant thought has been variously used by four persons widely distinguished from each other, Goethe, Washington Allston, Daniel Webster, and Dickens. Faust, as he sees "the green-girt cottages shimmer in the setting sun," exclaims, "Oh! that I have no wing to lift me from the ground, to struggle after, for ever after, him! I should see in everlasting evening

beams, the stilly world at my feet, — every height on fire, — every vale in repose, — the silver brook flowing into golden streams. The rugged mountain, with all its dark defiles, would not then break my godlike course. Already the sea, with its heated bays, opens on my enraptured sight. Yet the god seems at last to sink away. But the new impulse wakes. I hurry on to drink his everlasting light, — the day before me and the night behind, — the heavens above, and under me the waves."

After this, the lines of Washington Allston, in his poem of "America to Great Britain," seem tame, although the essential idea is preserved: —

"O stretch thy mighty hand
Gigantic grown by toil,
O'er the vast Atlantic wave to our shore;
For thou, with magic might,
Canst reach to where the light
Of Phœbus travels bright
The world o'er!"

Then follows Webster, with the magnificent image in which he celebrates the power

of the British empire, "a power," he says, "which has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with her possessions and military posts, whose morning drum-beat, following the sun, and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth daily with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England."

After being thrilled by this uplifting burst of eloquence, it is a break-neck fall to Dickens's shrewd and humorous embodiment of the same idea, when he calls the British dominions, "that wide-spread territory on which the sun never sets, and where *the tax-gatherer never goes to bed.*"

END OF VOLUME I

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